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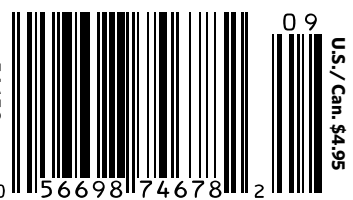
Faith in Action for Social Justice

GROUND OPERATION

Through farming, veterans
across the country tend
to the soil—and the wounds
of war.

Navy veteran
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at Thrive Acres,
her farm near
Sacramento, Calif.

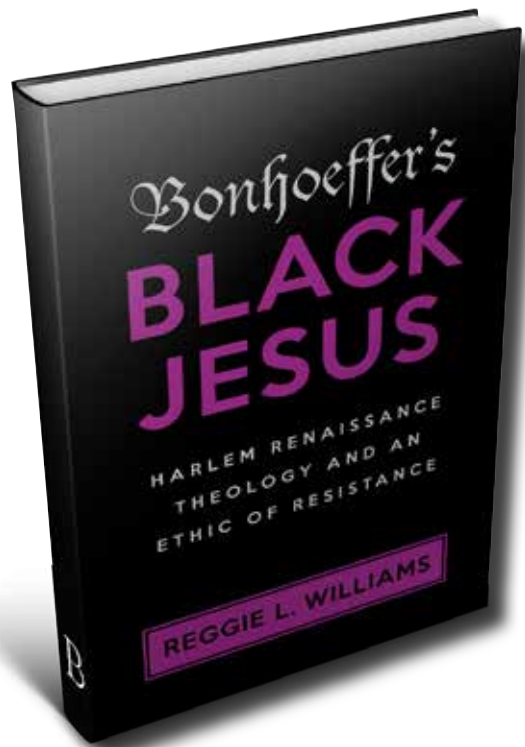
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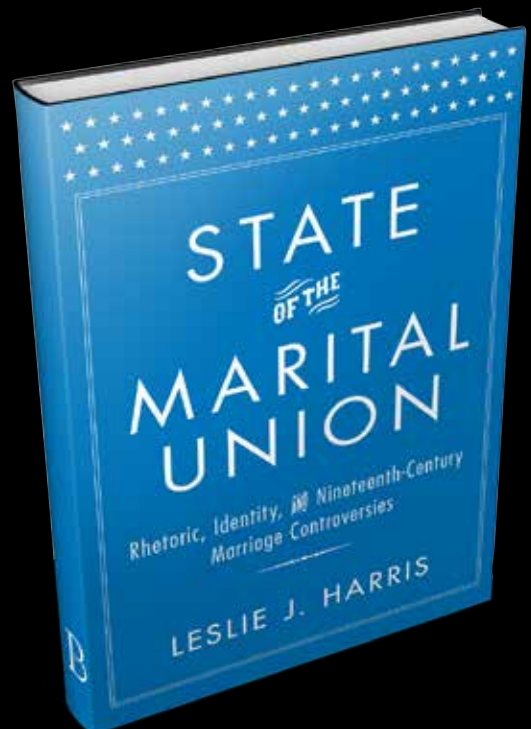
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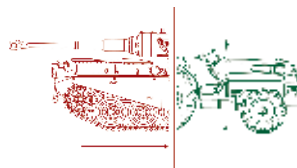
THE WARS IN Iraq and Afghanistan have led to an unprecedented number of veterans with post-traumatic stress. Experiencing the horrors of combat leaves wounds to body and soul that do not easily go away. The demons of deaths seen or caused are always ready to haunt, and too often alcohol or suicide becomes the way out. While the wars may end, their effects linger.

In this issue, Bethany Spicher Schonberg (a Pennsylvania farmer, Mennonite pacifist, and former *Sojourners* intern) writes of

farming as a way veterans have found to begin healing, including one who volunteers on her farm and has become a friend.

From rural farms to urban gardens, there is something about the warm sun, rich soil, and growing plants that provides a mission and a sense of purpose.

As this issue goes to print, we are celebrating the life of *Sojourners* associate editor Elizabeth Palmberg, who died of cancer on



June 23 (see “Cherish Each Moment,” June 2014). She was 43. Prior to coming to *Sojourners* in 2002, “Zab,” as she was known, was an English

professor at Kenyon College and Scripps College, when, as she described it, the Lord smote her upside of the head and instructed her to go seek a career working for a progressive Christian nonprofit. Lucky for us, she found *Sojourners*. Join us in giving thanks for Zab’s life and in cherishing each moment. ■

Letters

A SPECIAL TREASURE

Thank you for the article about the work of Robert Lentz (“An Iconic Faith,” by Patricia Zapor, July 2014) with the wonderful photos by Lloyd Wolf. I was moved by the encounter when Lentz said he “had the good fortune of having a Roman Catholic friend in San Francisco, Daniel O’Connor. ... He became my friend, and dialoguing with him ... helped me to stretch my reality.” Is there any better description of what a pastoral life is about? And that has not only been how O’Connor impacted Robert Lentz but also many people O’Connor has encountered in his long rich life of service. Moreover, such dialogue has come with the lightness of O’Connor’s laugh, not taking himself too seriously while honoring the great significance of such friendship and dialogue, and helping others open their lives. The remembrance of their friendship is a special treasure within the larger gift of the article.

Jim Laurie

Denver, Colorado

PULPIT ANTI-JUDAISM

Thanks so much for publishing David P. Gushee’s excellent “The Stubborn Persistence of Jew Hatred” (July 2014). Few people realize that one way “Jew hatred” continues to be perpetuated among Christians is through Sunday morning Bible readings proclaimed during worship. The many churches now using the common lectionary, for example, are enjoined to read more than 40 passages with an anti-Judaic tone in its three-year cycle.

In a modest effort to counter this “pulpit anti-Judaism,” the website “Sermons

“The pope is calling his church, and mine as well, to evangelism.”

Without Prejudice” identifies these “perilous passages,” points out their potential harm, and offers alternative wordings. We look forward to the day when Christians finally will reject “Jew hatred” and learn to affirm Christianity without faulting Judaism.

Dick Taylor

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

SACRED WORK

As a retired UCC pastor, I felt comfortable with Tom Allio’s well-done essay on Pope Francis (“No Longer the ‘Best Kept Secret,’” July 2014). All Protestants can be inspired by this teaching. I have read the “The Joy of the Gospel” and find it heartwarming. Yet the essay missed the foundational teaching on which all else depends. It is found on the first page: “I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an opening to letting him encounter them.” The pope is calling his church, and mine as well, to evangelism, sacred work that certainly includes social justice and would not be true to the gospel without it.

Rev. Luther C. Pierce

Gainesville, Florida

ABOLISHING PROHIBITION

The article by Michelle Alexander (“How to Dismantle the ‘New Jim Crow,’” July

2014) is heart-touching and wise. We Americans are fighting drug use now just as we fought alcohol in prohibition days. The parallel here is remarkable. We can understand that by “abolishing prohibition” of drugs we can move into help programs such as AA to help people resist harmful temptations. That would also enormously reduce prison populations.

Harold Wahking

via sojo.net

REQUIRED READING

Thank you for Randall Balmer’s article on the rise of the New Atheism (“Losing My Religion,” June 2014). Not only did I find it a well-reasoned and thoughtful commentary on where we are today, but I would also commend it both to those who came of age after the Carter/Reagan years and for those who are continually urged into complicity through the bully pulpits of our day. I wish it was required reading in my hometown.

Stephen Baker

Wheaton, Illinois

I have something to say about that! Write to letters@sojo.net or *Letters, Sojourners*, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

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BY JIM WALLIS

A Summit for Change



IN JUNE, SOJOURNERS decided to take part in a little experiment. What would happen if 300 faith and social justice leaders gathered together for a few days to discuss some of the most pressing issues of our time? Our first ever Summit, under the leadership of chief strategy officer Timothy King, had as its tagline: “World Change through Faith and Justice.” Only time will tell how this experiment will play out in the long run, but in the short term I would consider it a great success.

Held over four days in June at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., the conference brought together 296 leaders from churches, faith-based organizations, NGOs, media outlets, business, and politics. Fifty-three percent of attendees were female,

such as “The Stained-Glass Ceiling,” a panel discussion featuring outstanding women church leaders such as Diana Butler Bass, Iva Carruthers, Mimi Haddad, Hyepin Im, Jo Anne Lyon, and Sharon Watkins, and “Climate Change and International Development,” featuring the World Bank’s Jim Yong Kim and Rajiv Shah, who leads the U.S. Agency for International Development. Each day included smaller, salon-type events that covered a wide range of topics such as LGBTQ issues and the church, implicit bias, Pope Francis’ impact on the world, and the future of religion reporting. We even offered opportunities for sabbath and spiritual direction.

We held a reception on the first night that included a special visit from Rep. John Lewis and Sen. Cory Booker. Rep. Lewis reminded us that “we are followers of the Great Teacher. We need to be bold. We can’t be silent.” Sen. Booker gave a rousing speech that turned into a sermon, saying, “When I claim to be a Christian, it should be a radical statement.”

Though the conference featured many big names in the social justice world, what meant the most to us was hearing from people who are working faithfully in the movement. We closed the event on Saturday morning with a commissioning service centered on the concept of hope. Carroll Baltimore, Ron Sider, Marie Dennis, and I, representing “elders” of the movement, all shared reflections about hope and then offered individual blessings for the participants as they shared their hopes with us. Here is what some of them said:

“[My hope is] to give myself increasingly to the presence and work of Jesus in me—surrendering my being more and more completely to breathing his presence into this world.”

“I pray and hope for a world where women and girls do not expect to be abused, oppressed, treated as objects—throughout the world and in this country as well.”

“I hope to witness more confessions of living in diversity and harmony.”

“My hope at the end of these days is that I would allow God to dismantle the dividing walls that I’ve allowed to be erected in my own heart—that I might be an effective justice leader for God.”

“To find the courage to unself-consciously use my voice for justice.”

“That blind eyes will see, hardened hearts will become flesh, captives set free.”

“That my life continues to contribute to making God’s ‘kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.’”

“My hope is simply in the possibility of a risen Lord.”

“I am hopeful for renewed faith and courage to speak God’s truth as reason for restorative justice. Above all, I am hopeful for sustained energy for kingdom work!”

“To lead our church into a greater belief and practice of peace-making with justice.”

“I hope to follow Jesus with my whole life.”

“My hope is that churches will become welcoming places for refugees, immigrants, the disabled, and the vulnerable, and allow them all to share the gifts that God has given them and us.”

Amen, may it be so. ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners magazine.

“When I claim to be a Christian, it should be a radical statement.”

and half were people of color; they were drawn from a wide range of Christian and other religious and spiritual backgrounds.

On the first night, when I saw who was there, I knew the Summit was going to be a powerful and wonderful time. Some participants were local Washingtonians. Others came from as far away as Ethiopia to attend. The group included icons of the social justice movement such as Ron Sider, Marie Dennis, Yvonne Delk, Otis Moss Jr., and Tony Campolo as well as newer leaders such as Otis Moss III, Rachel Marie Stone, and Daniel Varghese, a Georgetown undergraduate who celebrated the Summit’s “radical egalitarianism.” As Timothy King mentioned in our opening session, the group looked a lot like the kingdom of God!

The Summit offered seven plenary sessions that covered topics

Eric Gay/Getty Images



A Crisis of Kids

Child refugees sleep in a holding cell in June at a Border Patrol detention center in Brownsville, Texas. The number of unaccompanied minors arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border has increased by 92 percent since 2013, with the greatest number coming from Honduras. The Pentagon's 2011 military budget increased spending in Honduras by 71 percent to fight drug and gang violence. Brutal gangs, as well as President Hernandez's military police, have created a climate of terror among Hondurans, with similar situations in Guatemala and El Salvador. "These people aren't coming [to the U.S.] for economic opportunity," said one U.N. official. "They are fleeing for their lives."

By David Cortright

Between Iraq and a Hard Place

U.S. intervention has been the problem in Iraq, not the solution.

THE DEEPENING CRISIS gripping Iraq is a clear and present danger to global security. The crisis is fundamentally political in nature, however, not military. It cannot be resolved through the use of force, least of all by external military action from the United States. In the past, U.S. intervention has been the problem in Iraq, not the solution. Indeed many of Iraq's current problems can be traced to the consequences of the U.S. invasion and occupation.

The United States now has a responsibility to help the Iraqi people, having contributed so much to their current travails, but our involvement should be diplomatic and humanitarian, not military. We should work through the United Nations to exert pressure on the violent extremists who are threatening the region and to mobilize international support for political and diplomatic solutions to the conflicts.

A major center of concern today is the extremist group called the Islamic State of

Iraq and Syria, now identifying as the Islamic State. This group led the military takeover of Mosul and other Iraqi cities. It is a direct offshoot of the al Qaeda forces that emerged during the armed resistance to the U.S. invasion, but is now a rival to, and even more extreme than, al Qaeda.

Prior to 2003, al Qaeda did not exist in Iraq. It was only after the U.S. invasion, which shattered the state and sparked widespread violence and insurgency, that Islamist extremist groups were able to gain a foothold in Iraq. American actions fostered staggering levels of corruption and exacerbated growing Sunni-Shia sectarian tensions.

Islamic State extremists now control major cities and stretches of territory in Iraq and Syria. In recent months many hundreds have died in the fighting, hundreds of thousands have fled their homes, and sectarian violence has spread. Yet to date no coordinated international action has been taken to counter the growing danger or to save Iraq

and Syria from further disintegration.

This crisis in Iraq poses a threat not only to the region but to the world. The battle-hardened forces of the Islamic State include hundreds of fighters from Europe and Chechnya and even some from the United States. Some of these fighters will likely take their warped ideology and violent skills with them when they return home. The Islamic State is building a de facto terrorist state across northern Iraq and Syria and destabilizing the region. It poses a greater and more cohesive danger than al Qaeda.

Rather than taking unilateral military action, the United States should take this crisis to the U.N. and work with other nations to seek a global response. Among the actions the U.N. could adopt are the following:

- Impose an arms embargo and targeted financial and travel sanctions against the leaders of the Islamic State and their supporters. Prohibit any form of assistance for

Our Mission

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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the terrorist organization and its operations.

■ Join with neighboring states in convening an international conference for Iraq, to assess the current security and political challenges facing the country and the region and to develop appropriate diplomatic, political, and security responses.

■ Reconvene the Geneva diplomatic process on Syria, with the full participation of Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other neighboring states, to renew the search for a negotiated solution to the Syrian civil war and enhanced security for neighboring states.

■ Increase humanitarian assistance for the millions of refugees who have fled the war in Syria and the spreading conflict in Iraq.

The proposed actions are no panacea for peace. U.N. engagement will not magically resolve the deep crises afflicting Iraq, Syria, and the region. More concerted multilateral action can help, however, and at a minimum can heighten global involvement and help to broaden the global alliance against the Islamic State.

There is nothing to lose, and perhaps much to be gained, by bringing this crisis to the U.N. The time to act is now, before the fire becomes a regional conflagration. ■

David Cortright, a Sojourners contributing editor, is director of policy studies at Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.

By Melissa Krull

Time to End 'Separate and Unequal' Schools

Where is the resolve among us to make lasting change for all children?

SIXTY YEARS AGO, Brown vs. Board of Education held that it was unconstitutional to have separate public schools for black and white students. Fifty years ago, a landmark piece of U.S. civil rights legislation was enacted that outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. By design it was to end, among other important things, educational racial inequities by eliminating separate educational experiences based on race.

Yet today, no matter how we view the data, children of color, especially African-American boys, show unequal levels of achievement—well below their white classmates. Data from the National Association for Educational Progress (NAEP) shows 38 years of limited-to-no change in rates of achievement for African-American and Latino children. Schools across the country are still distinctly segregated by race, and the willful interest and resolve to lead on these issues remains sluggish.

Overcoming systemic racial achievement disparities among children in our public schools is an overarching moral imperative of our day.

How is it that we cannot collectively rupture this trajectory—more than half a century later—“with all deliberate speed”? As an educational leader I find myself

focused on these questions: Are those invested in educating our children interested enough? Do we actually know how to educate all students equitably? Where is the resolve among us to make lasting change for all children? I believe that, if we are interested, we'll learn. And that once we know how, we can change this narrative—but *only* if we are resolved to insist on positive change no matter the cost.

As a former superintendent of schools in an affluent suburban community in Minnesota with rapidly changing racial demographics, we faced resistance to even small changes, such as efforts to avoid increasing low-income and racial segregation in our schools. Palpable dissatisfaction with the loss of white privileges, perceived rights, and gestures of entitlement emerged. We experienced petitions, Facebook pages, threatened litigation, demonstrations, rallies, and picketing against the change. There was no interest from these community members to understand or embrace the district's attempt to address the systemic factors in play for the low achievement levels experienced by most low-income children and children of color, yet their resolve to trump any improvement efforts for students other than their own was relentless.

From the Archives

September 1984

Where is the Refuge?

EL SALVADOR'S

war has already claimed 40,000 lives. But our government has taken the stance that Salvadoran "illegals" are economic, not political, refugees, and therefore have no right to be here. Despite stories and statistics to the contrary, our government doesn't believe they have a "well-founded fear of persecution" that would entitle them to political asylum here. Meanwhile refugees keep coming with the same story of their government's organized killing and repression. Where are our ears to hear and to respond? ...

It's an upside-down world these days. But a right-side-up world happens when I lay down my life, risk myself out of love for my brothers and sisters. I am not to close my heart to them, or to anyone. This earth is a sacred place—it and all the life it contains. We have created refuges to protect the life that we in our blindness destroy: bird refuges, endangered species lists, houses for battered women, places safe from violence. At one time this country was a refuge for people fleeing persecution. Where now is the refuge for those people? "You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for them as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34). ■

Stacey Merkt was a lay worker at Casa Romero, a halfway house for refugees in San Benito, Texas, when this article appeared.



The time to express serious concern for the educational achievement experiences of children of color in our schools is long overdue. Specifically, we should attend to the experiences of African-American boys, whose historic intersection with schools shows a tragic and unchanging pattern of failure and low achievement.

Becoming informed on the issues of racial equity is worthy of our time. Find time to read, discuss, and experience children of color and their families so that we understand how to contribute to the solution with clear and accurate information. With humility we should dismiss any reservations that reveal what we may not know about the lives and needs of students of color.

I've seen school leaders express apathy regarding the achievement levels of their own students of color. Yet after examining the revealing data trends, some have decided that these disturbing achievement patterns

do in fact, call for immediate action. These are the leaders who become determined to learn about the racial history and daily lives of their students. Once aware, their concern shifts toward a conviction to act, and positive change emerges.

Improving the school experiences for children of color should be a matter of great importance. School leaders should become deeply resolved to provide racially and culturally relevant school experiences for *all* students that lead to high levels of achievement. This is when we will begin to overcome the moral imperative of our day—eliminating predictable racial disparities among children in our schools. Be interested, be concerned, and get involved. ■

Melissa Krull, former superintendent of schools in Eden Prairie, Minn., is an assistant professor of educational leadership at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

By Rose Marie Berger

Creation Yearning to be Free

Are new EPA rules and a U.N. Climate Summit enough to turn the tide on climate change?

ON JUNE 2, Environmental Protection Agency administrator Gina McCarthy announced the next phase in the Obama administration's war on carbon pollution. The Clean Power Plan aims to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions from existing fossil-fuel power plants (the largest source of carbon pollution in the U.S.) 30 percent by 2030. That same day the stock market closed with record highs, and more than 173 companies and investors sent a letter to President Obama in support. Business understands that these regulations are good for long-term economic health.

State governments have welcomed the new plan because while the carbon limits are fixed, the path to achieving them is flexible. It allows both "rate-based" and "mass-based" methods of reduction, something unusual for the EPA, thus allowing some states to target specific industries and others to aim for overall carbon reductions. Catholic social teaching includes the principle of "subsidiarity"—let the most competent authority closest to the problem determine what works best in achieving a common-good goal. The

Clean Power Plan that McCarthy, a Catholic, has rolled out does that. Yet it's not enough and it's not fast enough to beat our ecological endgame.

President Obama has pledged to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. To this end, he has 1) steadily increased car and truck fuel-economy standards; 2) required permits and set strict emission standards on all new fossil-fuel power plants; and 3) taken smaller, interlocking steps, such as establishing wind and solar renewable energy production on public lands, working with China to phase out hydrofluorocarbons, and significantly restricting funding from U.S. foreign aid agencies for new coal plants in other countries. This fall he may launch a low-intensity war on methane pollution from fracking and landfills. It's not enough. There are too many loopholes.

If we had a working Congress, Obama might take giant steps toward his promise of cutting U.S. greenhouse gas pollution. But a key component for that to succeed would be ending handouts to fossil-fuel companies

and passing a common-good, integrity-of-creation, pro-life carbon tax. Right now, Congress can't even tie its own shoes, let alone exert that level of sophisticated leadership.

President Obama can and should do more. First, take the Keystone XL pipeline off the table by denying TransCanada's permit and force Big Energy to shift decidedly toward renewables now—not in 50 years. Second, sign onto and pay into the world Climate Green Fund. Third, show up in person at the U.N. Climate Summit in New York City in September, where Secretary General Ban Ki-moon intends to “reset” global climate talks. This Climate Summit is his altar call, his “come to Jesus” moment for heads of state on climate change—and he wants the whole world to be his witness.

To that end, the Peoples' Climate March in New York, held at the same time, may be the largest global climate action to date. “People power” events like this one inject hope into social transformation movements; they provide the disruptive innovation needed to create new sets of values; they demand the highest moral and effective standards from leaders. In other words, they amp up the “prophet” margin, giving voice to creation, which longs to be set free from slavery.

Is it enough? Is it fast enough? Not yet. The most ambitious climate targets set out by the U.N. and EPA aim for levels of atmospheric greenhouse gases around 450 parts per million (ppm), targets scientists call “high-risk.” The low-risk, conservative goal—where we get a planet that's healthy for children and other living things—is 350 ppm or lower. Currently, our carbon levels are at 401.8 ppm. It's not enough, but the ship is turning.

In mid-June, Union Theological Seminary announced it was divesting investments in fossil fuels from its \$108.4 endowment, becoming the first seminary in the world to do so. A week later, the Catholic University of Dayton announced it was divesting fossil fuels from its \$670 million investment pool.

Christians don't just *look* for hope in desperate times; we *are* the hope in desperate times. ■

Rose Marie Berger is a senior associate editor of Sojourners. Sign Sojourners' public comment to the EPA on the Clean Power Plan at sojo.net/epa-comments.

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Smiles from the Inside

I'M DREAMING. Ten young men about my son's age are singing me a Mother's Day greeting to the tune of "Happy Birthday." I recognize the melody, of course, but the language is foreign. Still, I'm delighted; I clap and laugh.

Oh, wait. It's Mother's Day 2014 and I'm not dreaming. In a refugee camp in Jordan, 10 young Syrian men are singing beautiful Arabic words to me and two other visiting American moms. It's our last stop in an intense week of refugee visits; it feels good to be laughing.

The singing men, and the young Syrian women who joined us as we toured an educational compound in the Za'atari U.N. refugee camp, were bright university students in Syria before the war—future historians, mathematicians, teachers, agricul-



Lynne Hybels, center, with Syrian refugees and staff at the Za'atari U.N. camp.

need to contribute positively to the future, Questscope trains young adult Syrians like the ones I met to be mentors, caseworkers, and teachers for younger children in the camp.

On a dusty side street in the maze of tents and temporary shelters that make up Za'atari, we find the headquarters—offices and classrooms—of Questscope. Most NGO offices in Za'atari are tucked safely behind a protected fence, but Questscope takes the radical approach of locating within the community it serves, giving ownership and power to the community, literally giving the keys to the compound to the young caseworkers and teachers it trains.

The young Syrian leaders we met had come to Za'atari as most refugees come, convinced they'd soon be returning home. After two-and-a-half years at Za'atari, they still long for home, but realize "it's better that we accept this, and work to create a better future, especially for the kids."

Making home visits throughout the camp, the young Syrian caseworkers identify at-risk kids and invite them to the Questscope center. Through music, art, and drama, kids learn to communicate their experiences. In computer labs they learn new skills. In classrooms, they choose subjects they want to discuss, and teachers facilitate life skills discussions.

With an estimated 85,000 residents, the Za'atari

refugee camp is considered the fourth-largest city in Jordan and the second-largest refugee camp in the world. It's hard to imagine anything good bubbling up in a desert city filled with traumatized people who have lost everything and don't want to be there. But the young leaders we met at Questscope—and the kids they serve—radiate vitality, joy, and camaraderie:

"We're like a family here." "Every day we learn something new, and we love that!" "We're united for the welfare of the kids. We're Syrians. These are our brothers and sisters. We have to help them." "I was destined to be a teacher in Syria. But I never received the quality of training I get here." "The kids we teach want to be here. They're having fun and learning at the same time." "When we started we were shy. We couldn't speak in front of people. Now we are training the trainers!" "We don't want to draw smiles on kids' faces. We want them to smile from the inside."

That, I suppose, is why I fell in love with Questscope. They've given a few of the nearly 3 million Syrian refugees smiles that emanate from the inside. And that spells a better future. ■



*Lynne Hybels, co-founder of Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois, is author of *Nice Girls Don't Change the World*. For more on Questscope, visit questscope.org.*

The Za'atari refugee camp is the fourth largest city in Jordan.

tural engineers; some just months from graduating—when the violence of Syria's civil war forced them to flee.

"But when you end up in a refugee camp," one of the young men explained, "people treat you like idiots. Like you understand nothing." Herein lies one of the great refugee tragedies. Living at the mercy of others and with little respect, no decision-making freedom, and no control over their future often fuels anger and hopelessness in young refugees.

Curt Rhodes, founder of Questscope, an NGO dedicated to empowering marginalized youth, says, "Perhaps the most dehumanizing thing that can be done to an individual is to take away his or her ability to make choices. ... [We must] increase their personal agency to make positive change in their lives and the lives of others like them." Recognizing the innate human

Br. Andrew Dinegar, C.F.A.



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A Theology of Interfaith Cooperation

SUMMER IS READING time and there's nothing I like more during the warm months than delving into geeky works on religion. This summer, Peter L. Berger and Brian D. McLaren have topped my list.

In a set of recent essays, Berger emphasizes that relativism and fundamentalism are two of the most prominent religious paths in the world today. Here's my one line definition of fundamentalism: "Being me is based on dominating you." And my simple definition of relativism: "I no longer know who I am when I encounter you."

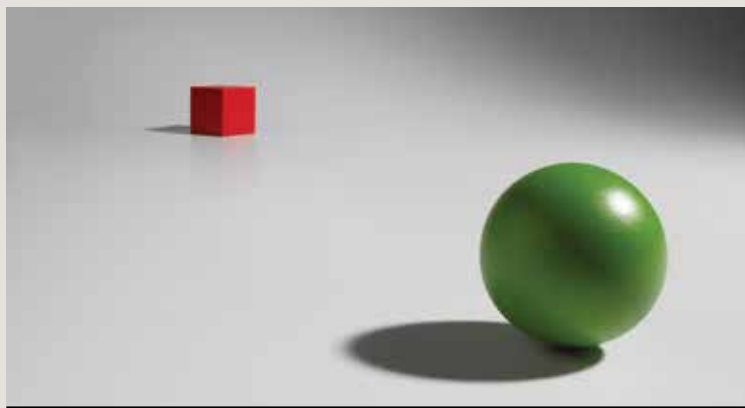
For Berger, while relativism and fundamentalism are at opposite extremes, they are actually closely connected in that they are both "products of the same process of modernization." As he first wrote decades ago in his book *The Heretical Imperative*, frequent and intense encounters between people with different identities is the

We can work with others even while disagreeing on significant issues.

signature characteristic of the modern era. In Berger's pithy phrase: modernity pluralizes.

Berger continues, "pluralism relativizes ... both institutionally and in the consciousness of individuals." In the pre-modern era, institutions, ideas, and identities had a largely taken-for-granted status. For most of human history, the vast majority of humankind had little to no choice about which institutions they were going to participate in or what their identities were going to be. Such matters were experienced as fate.

In the modern era, institutions become voluntary associations—people choose whether to participate—and identity has moved from fate to choice.



This puts an awful lot of pressure on moderns like us to constantly make conscious choices about what we participate in and who we are. This is pressure that our ancestors, who simply took for granted the network of institutions they grew up in and the identities they were handed, simply did not have.

One response to this pressure is to float uncomfortably in the mists of modernity, not committing to much of anything. This, of course, is relativism. But, as human beings are hardwired for certainty, and because where there is a demand someone will generate a supply, the explanation for growing fundamentalism is pretty clear as well.

Is there a third way here? The answer is yes—Berger calls it "the location of those who want to be religious believers without emigrating from modernity." Brian McLaren does a great job of describing how to get there in *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?*

McLaren points out that strong faith identity has long been associated with hostility toward others, while positive feelings toward others is connected with weak religious identity. He articulates the third way as strong faith identity associated with benevolence toward others.

He quotes one of his mentors, "In a pluralistic world, a religion is judged by the benefits it brings to its nonmembers."

This is what I have started calling a theology of interfaith cooperation. It means being able to weave from your own religion's resources—its scripture, doctrines, history, theology, poetry, heroes, etc.—a coherent narrative and fundamental logic for being in positive relation with others, even though you disagree with them on some significant things.

The metaphor of the bridge—a favorite among interfaith activists—proves useful in this situation. To seek to build a bridge means you want a positive connection to those who are different than you—which means you can't be a fundamentalist. But if you want a bridge to "there," you've got to have an anchor "here," and enough knowledge and skills to create something solid that people can travel over. This means relativism won't do.

Put Berger and McLaren together and you've got some pretty good reasons to work on that theology of interfaith cooperation! ■



Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, writes about social justice from his perspective as a Muslim American of Indian heritage.

Jeffrey Coolidge



2

TRANSFORMING POTENTIAL INTO EXPONENTIAL

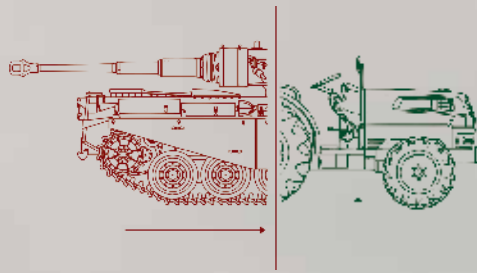
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Ground Operation

Through farming, veterans across the country tend to the soil—and the wounds of war.

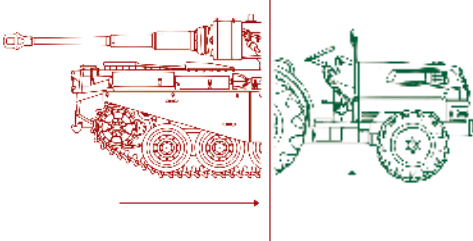
by **BETHANY SPICHER SCHONBERG**

IT'S A MAY evening on the farm. My husband's planting tomatoes and our son needs a bedtime story, but I'm completely occupied with pictures of war. I've cleared the piles of laundry from the kitchen table so our friend Adam can spread out his albums. There are photos of Adam in his tidy platform tent, of brown mountains in the distance, and dozens of pictures of children grinning on the other side of razor wire.



“When you get out of the military,
you’ve got to find your crew.
For me, it’s these amazing
women farmers. We’d
give our lives for
each other.”

—Navy veteran
Vonita Murray
on her farm near
Sacramento,
Calif.



“This is an Aardvark,” he says, pointing to a gargantuan armored vehicle as he describes the flails that detonate buried mines. “What does that do to the soil?” I ask, because this is what you wonder when you and your family have been Mennonite farmers since the Reformation. There are a few more photos before I finally get it. Adam is showing me Bagram Air Base, the U.S. military hub in Afghanistan, surrounded by minefields and littered with burned-out tanks and planes, the wreckage of war from the Soviets. No one farms here, or has, or will for a long, long time.

FOR THE PAST three seasons, Adam McDermott has come to our farm in Central Pennsylvania’s Stone Valley every Friday morning to harvest vegetables for the food bank. We always chat while we bunch beets or pick green beans, and now I wonder why we’ve never talked about his years in the Army.

“This farm has definitely been part of my therapy,” he tells me, while offering a brief sketch of his months in Iraq: taking heavy equipment down unfamiliar roads to set off hidden explosives, being promoted to sergeant, and then losing three friends when a bomb shattered their Humvee. Adam came home in 2008 with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and an alcohol addiction. “A lot of guys struggle with alcohol,” Adam says. “In the military you have camaraderie and a sense of purpose. But when you get back, there’s just this big void.”

Across the U.S., there’s a growing movement among veterans to fill this absence with agriculture. Michael O’Gorman started the Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) out of his pickup truck six years ago. Based in Davis, Calif., the FVC serves nearly 100 vets a month, offering job connections, mentors, training, and resources to beginning farmers.

When I talk with O’Gorman, he dispels one myth right away about farming and veterans. “Most people assume farming is healing because you’re waltzing through fields of lavender with your basket picking vegetables,” he says. “But you know farming. If you didn’t have PTSD before, you sure will in a few years. These are kids whose world was shattered by 9/11. They

joined the military at 19, and their reasons for joining were mission driven. Farming—now here’s something with a mission. It’s real, it’s difficult, it’s physical and mental, and it protects and serves a community of people.”

In the next decade, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, half of current U.S. farmers are set to retire. Meanwhile, the 2.6 million soldiers deployed since 2001 return home to face an uncertain job market. “I know what it’s like,” says Army veteran Justen Garrity. “I got a Bronze

sense of recognition, or honor, or victory, or completion. But more and more people support beginning farmers, and they will support veterans with a little encouragement.” The FVC’s Homegrown by Heroes program, launched in 2013, banks on that support, offering vets a label to identify their agricultural products at farmers markets or retail stores.

Adam Burke’s Veterans Farm produces “Red, White, and Blueberries,” which are beloved by local Jacksonville, Fla., residents—most of all because their growers

In certain circles, young farmers have rock-star status, which can be empowering for veterans.

Star in Iraq, and six months later I was on unemployment.”

With the help of a \$5,000 grant from FVC, Garrity launched Veteran Compost in 2010. He now employs eight other veterans to sell compost and collect food scraps from schools, hospitals, restaurants, and stores around Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Justen attributes his success—the business turned a profit in its first 18 months—to a combination of hard work and good timing. “When I started, I was going to restaurants offering to pick up their food scraps, and they said, ‘What are you talking about?’ The last couple of years, there’s been all kinds of interest on the collection side and the production side. Whether it’s for health, economic, or environmental reasons—everybody’s growing food, and nobody wants Miracle-Gro on their gardens anymore.”

Likewise, my husband, Micah, and I started farming in 2009 just after the documentary *Food, Inc.*—and before that Michael Pollan’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* and Barbara Kingsolver’s *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*—turned the nation’s heart toward local food and farmers. Though it remains difficult to buy land or acquire enough capital to start a farm, in certain circles young farmers have rock-star status, which can be empowering for veterans starting out in agriculture. “For whatever reason, there hasn’t been a ticker-tape parade for anyone coming home since World War II,” O’Gorman explains. “There’s not been a

are disabled vets. Wounded by shrapnel in Iraq, Burke came home in 2004 with a Purple Heart and a traumatic brain injury that left him with blinding headaches and unable to walk without a cane.

“The last thing I remember when I was injured,” says Burke, “was praying that if God would let me see my family again, I’d make my life worth saving.” A 2009 meeting with O’Gorman of the Farmer Veteran Coalition gave Burke a chance to make good on his promise. FVC bought his first blueberry bushes and now, five years later, Veterans Farm has grown to 19 acres of berries, vegetables, and herbs—all wheelchair accessible—with a six-month Beginning Farmer fellowship program that, since 2011, has graduated 32 veterans. Dozens more vets have received donations of equipment or seed money to get started in agriculture, and over the years, Burke and his blueberry farm have mentored hundreds of veterans.

“The thing about farming,” says Burke, “is that we focus on the future, not the past. The majority of veterans who come here have PTSD. They’re thinking about the past when they go to sleep. Now they’re planning for the future—what do we need to do tomorrow or next month in the field? In addition, the fellowship program allows them to work with children with disabilities, which enables them to focus on issues other than themselves.”

Along with training in agriculture and business, Veterans Farm fellows also gain job skills by volunteering in the Jacksonville

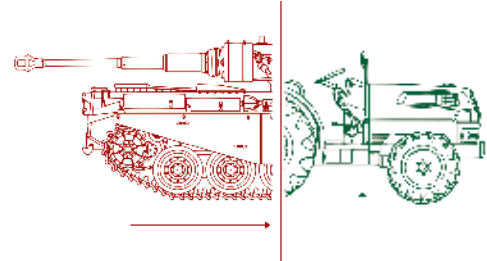


David Fenton



Farmer Veteran Coalition

Navy veteran Kelly Carlisle (top) with urban gardeners from Acta Non Verba in Oakland, Calif.; Purple Heart recipient Adam Burke (in black, at left) and vets in a Veterans Farm training program plant blueberries at a homeless shelter in Jacksonville, Fla.; Farmer Veteran Coalition founder Michael O'Gorman (above, right) inspects a donated tractor.



community. “There are stereotypes about PTSD,” Burke explains. “People feel that [veterans] are crazy or depressed or won’t show up for work. We get out in the community and build gardens and donate to the food bank, so that business leaders can meet veterans and feel comfortable hiring them.” This year, Veterans Farm is launching an ambitious partnership with the University of Florida to offer accredited training to more veterans and to connect graduates with land and farmer mentors.

In Oakland, Calif., Navy veteran Kelly Carlisle is growing vegetables with urban youth who face barriers very similar to those of wounded vets. “Vets with PTSD can’t get jobs, and it’s the same in East Oakland,” she notes. “People say the whole area is unhireable.”

In 2010, Carlisle started Acta Non Verba, a garden-centered summer camp for kids, after reading a news story that cited Oakland’s 40 percent dropout rate. “In the comments below the story, someone wrote that the world only needs so many nuclear physicists, but we’ll always need janitors, so why bother educating East Oakland?” Carlisle was outraged. “As a veteran, I fought to promote freedom. This isn’t freedom.” So she asked the city for a quarter acre and launched her first summer



Army veteran Adam McDermott and Dawn McDermott harvest rhubarb at Plowshare Produce in central Pennsylvania.

land—somewhere between three and five acres—and kick it up to food production level, so that we can really start to change the food system and so the kids can have a place as a retreat.”

The FVC bought a pickup truck for Acta Non Verba and continues to sup-

“When you get out of the military, you’ve got to find your crew,” says Navy veteran and aquaponics farmer Vonita Murray. “For me, it’s these amazing women farmers. We’d give our lives for each other.” Bethany Spicher Schonberg

WHEN MY HUSBAND and I started farming, we named our five acres Plowshare Produce, wanting our work to further the prophet Isaiah’s vision of transforming weapons into tools for nourishing a community. But some days when the sun’s beating down, bugs are eating holes in the vegetables, and the tractor won’t start, Micah comes home and says, “It feels like war out there!” Of course, neither of us knows what war feels like. But for veterans like our friend Adam, wounded by years of dedicating mind and body to war, a battle to make things grow, no matter how arduous, might feel like peace.

In 2013, filmmakers Dulanie Ellis and Raymond Singer released an award-winning documentary inspired by the work of the Farmer Veteran Coalition. *Ground Operations: Battlefields to Farmfields* ends with a series of farm scenes and O’Gorman’s moving tribute to agriculture as a path to healing for veterans: “When you’ve gone out and seen the world and had your friends die in your arms, you’re com-

A battle to make things grow, no matter how arduous, might feel like peace.

camp. Kids from age 5 to 13 plan, plant, harvest, and sell vegetables, and the profits go directly into personal savings accounts for their future education.

Last year, of the 75 children who came to summer camp, only 25 showed up for graduation and only 13 set up a savings account. “We brought the banker to the farm and everything,” Carlisle laments. “The disinvestment in East Oakland has been so generational and so pervasive. It’s terrifying. My one little drop of teaching kids how to farm and how to save money feels like a losing battle.” Still, Carlisle is determined to keep going. “My big dream is to get more

port Carlisle and other women veterans by connecting them online and in person through annual Empowering Women Veterans conferences. “They put us up in a nice hotel, and we got training in the legalities of running a farm, insurance, business planning,” Carlisle says. “But the best thing is this group of brilliant women. We have almost daily check-ins now about how people are doing with parenting, school, farming, and work.” This October, nine women—all friends from last year’s conference—are traveling together to Italy as delegates to Terra Madre, Slow Food’s biennial conference.

ing home ... and you’re looking for where is my place in this life. We feel like this is the place where you can take all those things you brought into the military: your strength, your bravery, your ability to stand up when you’re knocked down, your sense of service and sacrifice, your willingness to carry the world on your shoulders.” And to that I can only say “Amen.” ■

Bethany Spicher Schonberg, a former Sojourners intern, grows vegetables with her husband, Micah, their son, Ben, and her parents on their CSA farm in central Pennsylvania.

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A BURNING

TRU

A derailed train burns near Casselton, N.D., in December 2013, spilling more than 400,000 gallons of crude. North Dakota is now the second-largest oil producer in the United States, after Texas.

Photo courtesy Cass County Commissioner Ken Pawluk



U T H

**Fracking for oil and gas has toxic consequences
for surrounding communities. Even worse:
It's fueling climate change.**

BETWEEN 6:30 AND 7 nearly every morning, a dark rumble drifts up through the chilled air from the railroad tracks at the bottom of our hayfield in the Adirondack foothills of New York. A line of more than 100 black tanker cars, mostly full of fracked Bakken oil from North Dakota, rolls southward. They will pass the field where our neighbor's kids play, then close alongside beautiful Lake Champlain, which defines this region, and on to Albany, where the oil will be put on barges and floated down the Hudson River to New Jersey, to be stored or refined.

Tanker cars like these have been blowing up recently. An accident north of us, over the Canadian border, flattened a downtown and killed 47 people. These cars carry a mix of crude oil and volatile compounds arising from the fracking process, making them dangerously flammable. I worry about my small town's



NO EXCUSE CAN OVERRIDE THIS CENTRAL FACT: ACCESS

volunteer fire fighters, all of whom I know personally and admire greatly, who do not have the expertise or the equipment to deal with an accident like that.

Watching the tanker cars, I am also haunted by a scene seared into my memory five months ago. We are driving east along U.S. Route 2 in North Dakota, our small camper in tow, trying to pass through Williston, smack in the middle of the Bakken oil fields.

As the sun sets, we see hundreds of oil and gas rigs flaring excess volatile gases in huge plumes of orange flame. Processing plants spew fumes of God-knows-what. There are row upon row of metal trailers, boxes really, actually used as housing for people. Unrelenting traffic beats a path on the undivided highway under furious construction, with no breakdown lanes or turn-offs for miles. Huge water tankers and oil trucks force us to move onward at 60 mph; there will be no rest for us here, as all campgrounds, gas stations, and parking lots are filled with the rigs of the temporary workers.

The surrounding horror is accentuated by remnants of small farms—patches of green with a couple horses and some beef cows grazing in a hay field. A small house, a swing set, an old tractor. Later, we hear about shootings, gambling, theft, and prostitution, the increase in domestic violence, the homelessness of fired temporary workers who had hoped to make a fast and furious buck in the oil fields.

It occurs to us that maybe this is what

hell looks like, and we wonder why we ignored the explicit recommendation of the U.S. border guard at the crossing from Canada to assiduously avoid this region. It is a 21st century version of the feverish wealth-seeking of a century-and-a-half ago, but the prize is black, not gold, and the ultimate collateral damage is to the entire planet.

FRACKING, OR hydraulic fracturing, is the poster child for an industry whose dominant discourse seeks to make us forget basic moral issues of justice and caring for our neighbors and the earth. Proponents of fracking feed us slick promises and carefully orchestrated “facts” that conveniently deflect us from discussing the central issue: climate change.

We are told fracking for oil creates jobs, will make our country energy independent, and will reduce the price of gas at the pump. The natural gas produced, we are told, will put less carbon into the air (than coal).

Other people are better equipped to argue with each of these points in nuanced ways. (There are sound arguments countering each.) In the end, few minds will be changed. It is, after all, a matter of each individual’s priorities—and if you do not have a job or are scared of the oil barons in the Middle East, your priorities may come down on the side of fracking.

But why should the words jobs, energy independence, cheap gas, or even less carbon stop discussions about the overall wisdom of fracking? The countering list of concerns grows longer every day: ensuring the safe

transport of the oil by train or pipeline; long-term protection of the communities now overrun by the oil boom; diversion of already limited water supplies; disposal of fracking waste water and solids; air pollution near the fracking sites; release of methane; and even earthquakes.

From the point of view of the oil companies, because each of these concerns must be assiduously addressed, they conveniently divert our attention from the central travesty: We are poisoning water, air, and land, risking people’s lives, and destroying communities to get more of something that we should not be using so much of anyway!

No excuse—from jobs to security to cheap gas—can override this central fact: Access to more oil will result in the use of more oil. Use of more oil will increase carbon emissions and exacerbate climate change. And, as always, the poor will disproportionately shoulder the burden.

We are told that extreme weather events—hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, California droughts, polar vortexes—cannot be attributed directly to climate change. This is simply scientists being very careful: Correlation is not the same as causation. This crucial distinction has plagued scientific discussions around climate change from the beginning. Questioning drives the engine of science and legitimizes it. Unfortunately, perhaps due to a shocking lack of scientific literacy in this country, this misunderstanding continues to consume far too much media attention. And it conveniently keeps



TO MORE OIL WILL RESULT IN THE USE OF MORE OIL.

us off track from the more important consideration: how to slow climate change.

When I come to the table to discuss clean water, air, soil, safety, and a future for my grandchildren, I am dismissed as unrealistic. It seems to me assuming that this problem will fix itself without radical change in our energy consumption is far more unrealistic. Dismissing those who hope for change will not make their arguments go away.

We are told the vested interests of the oil companies must be carefully protected so as to not hinder our slowly recovering economy. As a neighbor, I have a “vested interest” that those trains rolling by our farm fields do not accidentally blow up my neighbor’s children. As an environmentalist, I have a vested interest in a planet that will support future generations much the same as it has so far—(even better, if it can be done more equitably). And as a person of conscience, I have a vested interest in refraining from putting in someone else’s backyard what I would not put in mine.

Aren’t these vested interests as legitimate as those claimed by the oil interests, their legion subcontractors, politicians, and investors? Indeed, supporting community capital and not just monetary capital, I would argue, has considerably more moral legitimacy.

We are told there are ways to mitigate the effects of climate change. The most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states encouragingly: “Adaptation to climate change is transitioning from a phase of awareness to the construction of actual strategies and plans.”

The recently released National Climate Assessment has whole chapters on mitigation and adaptation. So do we ignore the disease as we treat the symptoms? And let’s be real: Options for adaptation are calamitously lacking among the poor.

We are told that if we use oil, we are in no moral position to complain about fracking. But when you live in the middle of a nightmare of misdirected geopolitical priorities, it seems to me that naming them is a moral obligation, even as you acknowledge that it is difficult to extricate yourself from their influence.

We must not let any of these arguments divert us from the reality that all creation is groaning. The bottom line is that these rationales are all trumped by the present and pervasive danger of climate change.

THE TRAINS ROLLING by the edge of our field are symptomatic of a much deeper problem. Local groups around here can’t do much on their own to stop the trains, so they divert their attention to fighting the use of fracking wastewater to melt ice on our roads. There are so many concerns. It is like trying to chase rabbits racing off in all directions. How convenient for the industry.

Meanwhile, high-pressure pumps continue to send water, sand, and chemicals into shale deposits to release gas and oil. As it’s gathered, refined, and burned, the parts per million of carbon will rise. Seas will be drowning small island nations, hunger will increase precipitously due to drought, and wars will be

fought over water and arable land.

A century-and-a-half ago this country’s moral judgment drew it into a war to delegitimize and eventually overthrow an entire economic system that was based on the immoral premise that people could be held as property. People of faith were in the forefront of that effort.

Today we live with an economic system based on the extraction and use of fossil fuels. It is not only foolhardy for a number of economic, environmental, and social reasons; it is immoral because it perpetuates the overwhelming injustices of climate change.

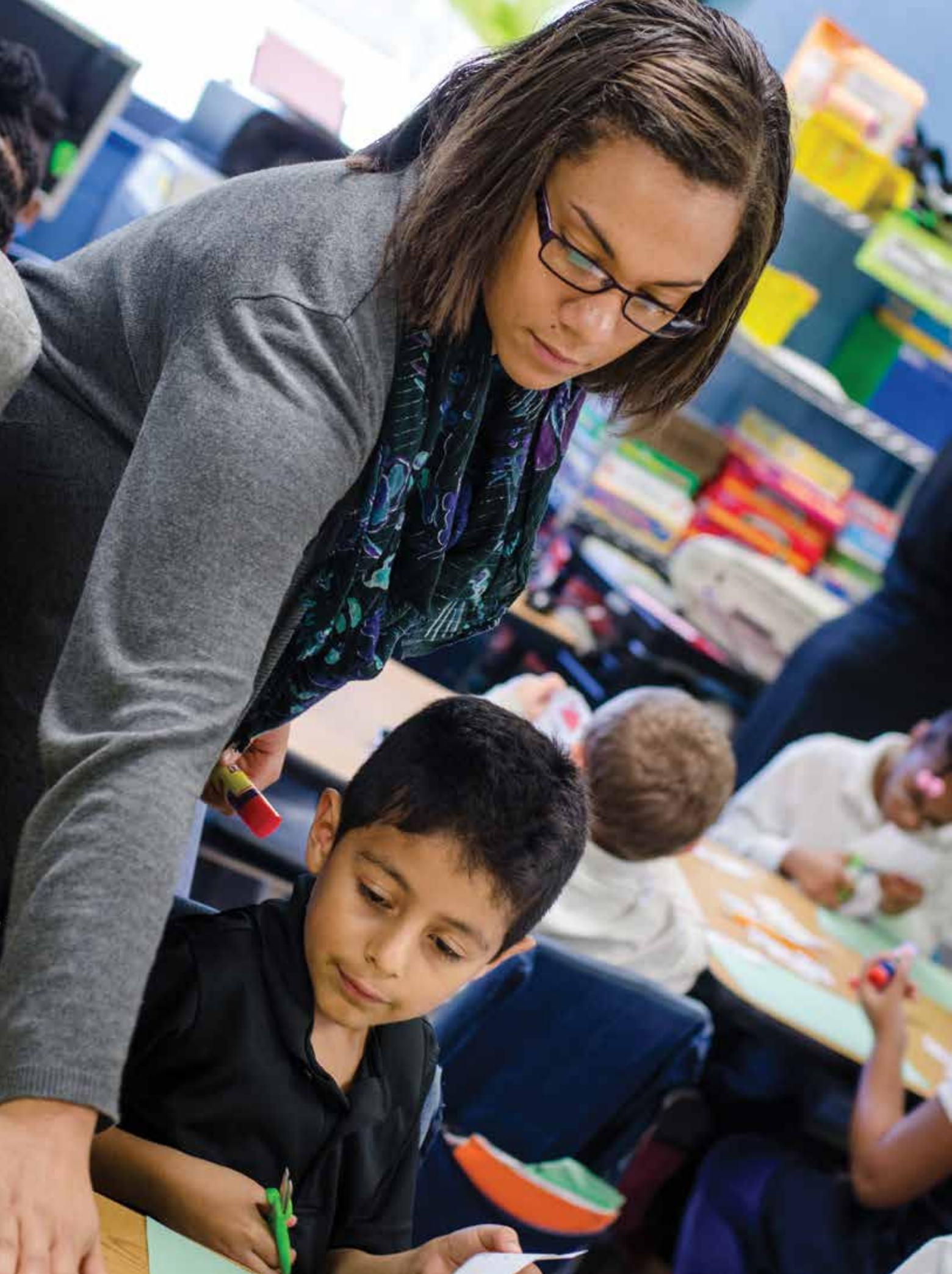
People of faith and others need to do some deep thinking in this country about this fossil fuel-based economic system, and we need to begin by defining the discussion on moral grounds. Destroying the planet to preserve the economy is nuts. An economic system that does not specifically aim to alleviate the suffering of the poor and preserve the future of the planet is, at its very core, immoral. And for those that imply that the necessary changes are too radical for consideration, I refer them to the teachings of Jesus, which if nothing else, taught us that sometimes a world must be turned upside down to be redeemed.

Fracking is in everyone’s back yard: We need to redefine the moral state of the union. ■

Katharine M. Preston is an ecumenical lay preacher and writer, concentrating on issues of social justice and climate change.



Road to perdition?
Oil rail cars carry
crude from the Bakken
oil fields in western
North Dakota.





Agents of Grit and Grace

A unique faith-based training program in Memphis gives new teachers the skills and community they need to survive and thrive.

by **BOB SMJETANA** • photos by **GRETCHEN SHAW**

THE 67 PEOPLE gathered in the basement of Union Baptist Church in Memphis have come from all over: Appalachian State University and Asbury College, Louisiana State and Liberty University, Wright State and Wheaton College. The youngest is 21; the oldest, 48. They've come to teach in some of the lowest performing schools in the state of Tennessee.

For the next 12 months, they'll live, learn, and pray together, becoming a family as they also learn to become teachers and colleagues. All were drawn by faith and a dream that God is doing unexpected things in the city schools of Memphis.

Welcome to the Memphis Teacher Residency (MTR), a faith-based nonprofit that's become one of the most effective teacher training programs in Tennessee.

At the front of the room, Rev. Tom Fuerst, an associate pastor at Christ United Methodist Church, gives the morning devotional. His message: The world is broken and so are Memphis schools. But God wants to fix them both. Fuerst describes the idea of "prior grace"—that God is at work in the world long before we are aware of it—and invites the new trainees to become agents of that grace by becoming great teachers.

But Fuerst, like everyone at MTR, is quick to warn the aspiring teachers—known as residents—against proselytizing. The residents, as public school teachers, don't preach faith in the classroom, hold Bible studies, or actively discuss

their faith. That would make the classroom unsafe for non-Christian students, warned Fuerst.

That doesn't mean that MTR hides its Christian identity. Organizers believe that every student in Memphis is a child of God and deserves a great education. They believe that providing great public education is part of the gospel. The gospel motivates everything they do. But preaching is not part of their educational strategy.

Instead, they believe Christians have a calling to help renew the world. "God is in the business of putting things back together," Fuerst said. "The education system is busted—but God is putting it back together."

"This is not for the faint of heart."

TWO YEARS AGO, Amy Barger was sitting in the same basement room, listening to a similar message. A Memphis native and former *Sojourners* intern, Barger recently finished her first year of teaching freshman English at Kingsbury High School in Graham Heights, one of four neighborhoods that MTR focuses on. Most of her students came from poor families—about 85 percent of students in Memphis City Schools are economically disadvantaged, according to a 2012 report from the University of Memphis.

Leah Parker, left, and Daniel Warner, top, are members of the Memphis Teacher Residency class of 2014. They start their first year as Memphis schoolteachers this fall.



It was a hard year, Barger said. Many of her students had struggles at home that carried over into the classroom, and she wasn't always sure what to do. For support, she relied on several colleagues from MTR, who had classrooms nearby. They offered guidance on how to best help her students, as well as friendship and support. "For me it was a lifesaver," she said.

One of the strengths of the MTR program is that it focuses on a few schools in a few neighborhoods, rather than trying to spread residents across the Memphis school

they spend Monday through Thursday in the classroom with their mentor. Friday and Saturday are taken up with graduate classwork. Residents get housing in the Georgian Woods apartment complex, not far from MTR's offices, along with a stipend of \$1,000 a month. They are not allowed to work outside of the program and only get two personal days off during the year.

After that first year, they'll have a master's degree and teacher certification. They are then obligated to teach for at least three years in Memphis schools. Most will likely

"You fail a lot, that's the biggest thing," said Ward. There's a lot of trial and error as a new teacher figures out her identity. With the help of her coach and fellow teacher, Ward found she was able to work through her shortcomings as a rookie teacher. She's now a mentor to residents herself.

Teaching is challenging, and there aren't always a lot of immediate results. But their students have made progress, especially in reading. That's a good first step, Purdy said.

"We are not going in to evangelize. The best way you can witness and serve is to teach Algebra 1 effectively."

district. So when new MTR teachers such as Barger come in, they've got a ready-made support network. That's good for the new teacher and for the students.

As part of its strategy, MTR also tries to place residents and graduates in what they call "a feeder pattern" of related schools. For instance, there's a pair of MTR-trained English teachers at Kingsbury Middle School, which feeds into Kingsbury High School. So some of Barger's future students will have had MTR teachers before reaching her classroom. It's a way to provide students with consistency.

During their first year in Memphis, new residents serve an apprenticeship in a local school. They are paired with an experienced teacher who helps them learn the craft of teaching. At the same time, they take graduate courses through Union University, a Christian college based in Jackson, Tenn.

The program is demanding. In the fall,

end up staying longer.

That's in large part because of the friendships they've developed among fellow residents. For example, Merissa Ward and Stacey Purdy are 2011 MTR graduates who have taught for the past three years at Hanley Elementary in the Orange Mound section of Memphis. When they arrived, the school had some of the lowest test scores in the state.

That's not uncommon in Memphis, according to *Education Week*. There were 69 Memphis schools ranked in the bottom 5 percent of statewide test scores for 2012-13, including Hanley. (It's since been re-opened as a charter school, Aspire Hanley Elementary.)

Starting out at a struggling inner-city school wasn't easy. "This is not for the faint of heart," said Purdy. "I don't know if I would have made it through that first year if Merissa hadn't been on my team."

SO FAR, THE MTR approach seems to be working. The nonprofit was recently named one of the most effective teacher training programs in the state by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

Barbara Stengel, a professor of education at Vanderbilt University, said that MTR benefits from what she calls "design synergies." Its program addresses a number of challenges that urban teachers face, she said—including that the problems of inner city schools are too big for any one teacher to handle.

"Urban teaching is a team sport," she said. "It is not possible, except in the most unusual case, for someone to succeed in a big way on their own. It's too heartbreaking. It's too hard—you need a posse." By training its residents in a cohort and having them live, pray, and eat together, MTR is building the community that those teachers will need when they get into the classroom. That gives them a better chance to thrive as urban educators, said Stengel.

"It creates a better education for the kids in school. It creates community for people who are going into the teaching profession," she said. "What they are doing is reimaging the career path of urban teachers."



Members of the Memphis Teacher Residency make a three-year commitment to teach in Memphis. From left, Jennifer Hooper, Blake Lam, Sara Ferren, and Parker Fleming.

Stengel says the faith dimension of the program also will help the residents thrive. Many educators focus so much on test scores that they forget the bigger picture. “One of the things missing in public education is the articulated understanding that this is moral work,” she said. “You can call it a Kantian respect for persons or the idea that all people are God’s children. But this is moral work. We don’t talk about that in schools today. We talk about test scores. What I love about MTR is that it wears its purpose on its sleeves.”

Still, the program’s Christian emphasis could have a downside, said Stengel, leading to pride or a savior mentality, when what urban schools need are skilled teachers who are also humble. That concern also weighs heavily on the minds of MTR organizers and residents. It’s a delicate balance: In order to be successful, teachers need to have a great deal of self-confidence and professional competence and a commitment to doing the right thing, even when it is hard. But they also need to be humble and willing to adapt and learn from their mistakes.

Most of all they need to have grit.

Barger said she’s often inspired by the poem “To Be of Use,” by Marge Piercy. She paraphrases a line from the poem: “I want to be someone who stands in a line and passes my bucket along when there’s a fire to put out.”

Program organizers say they are looking for that kind of humble confidence and determination when selecting candidates. That’s in part because residents are not guaranteed a job when they finish their first year—although they usually get snapped up because principals are impressed by the program’s reputation. But once in the job, they’re

subject to the same scrutiny as any other teacher. If their kids don’t do well on state tests, or their schools don’t show improvement, they can lose their jobs. “Their neck is on the line,” said Leslie Garrote, a former teacher who now coaches for MTR.

To help them succeed, MTR provides coaching for residents both during the year of residency and in their first three years of teaching. Coaches visit residents in the classroom, film them at work, and then post the video with comments on a private website. Residents also write in an online journal



MTR director Robin Scott and founder David Montague

each day and get feedback from their coach. The idea is to build a habit of constant, small improvements for residents as they become teachers. That feeds into MTR’s larger goal, of helping to transform communities by creating a critical mass of highly trained, dedicated teachers in a small number of urban schools.

“We are not interested in silos of excellence,” said MTR founder David Montague.

Montague, 48, doesn’t come from a traditional teaching background. He spent 15 years as a stockbroker before becoming the director of Service Over Self, a Memphis-based Christian home-repair ministry. He later spent two years in East Asia with Campus Crusade for Christ. When he came back to Memphis, he was approached by a

church friend who runs a local foundation. The foundation wanted to start a Christian version of “Teach for America” and asked Montague to run the program.

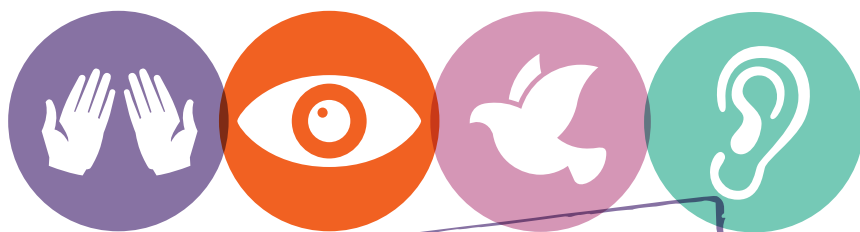
They ended up with something slightly different. Montague learned about the Boston Teacher Residency, one of the first programs of its kind in the country. He visited the program in Boston and eventually took some of the new staff there as well. They later joined Urban Teacher Residency United, a Chicago-based network of about two dozen similar programs.

All provide yearlong, in-classroom apprenticeships for teachers, said Tamara Azar, director of external relations for UTRU. “Through the course of being able to observe, practice, receive coaching, and then practice again, residents are really prepared to teach on day one,” she said.

Memphis Teacher Residency is the only faith-based program in the network. “I look at it as a really innovative recruiting approach,” Azar said.

The program took about a year to set up. At first most of the work was done by Montague; Robin Scott, a college professor who now serves as the program’s director; and Leah Luttrell, a former Memphis teacher. The process wasn’t easy. They had to find a college willing to partner with them to provide graduate classes—which turned out to be Union University—and convince school principals to provide mentors. They also had to figure out the hiring process, so they’d be able to help residents get jobs.

Most important, they had to find 20 or so residents who were willing to take a chance and join their new program, even though all the details hadn’t been worked out. That first group deserves a great deal of credit



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for getting the program off of the ground. "Without them, David and I would just be a pair of nuts," said Scott, with a smile on her face.

Since many MTR residents come from outside Memphis, the first class they take is on the culture and history of the neighborhoods in which they'll teach. Part of the lesson is learning that those neighborhoods have great pride and many strengths. MTR residents are taught not to come in as do-gooders to save the day, but instead to be willing to serve in order to earn the respect of students and their families, said Scott.

"You have to understand that some of [the students'] grandparents might have marched with Dr. King," she said. "You love them. You bless them. You serve them. But you have to understand that they will be skeptical."

Residents also take part in a weekly spiritual development group. The idea is to help residents to mature as people, not just as teachers.

An ordained African Methodist Episcopal pastor, Scott is very clear about the role that faith plays in the program. But she also is clear about the limits teachers must respect when it comes to faith in the classroom. "We are not going in to evangelize," she said. "The best way you can witness and serve is to teach Algebra 1 effectively."

Of the 22 residents who completed the program that first year in 2010, 21 stayed to finish their three-year teaching commitment. Most—19—are still in teaching. And 16 of them are still teaching in Memphis.

Including this year's class of 67, there have been a total of 192 residents. Montague credits the rigorous preparation and the sense of community that residents develop—as well as their shared faith—for the program's success.

In the end, he wants the residents to be not just great teachers who love what they do, but great teachers who love teaching in Memphis and who call the city their home. "Our goal is not just to produce great teachers," he said. "Our goal is something more than that. We want to do this in such a way that we can help restore and redeem communities so that people can live in them."

Still, he admits, he and other leaders have a lot of work to do. And a lot to learn along the way. "We don't think that we have all the right answers," he said. "But we want to help." ■

Bob Smietana is senior writer for Facts and Trends magazine and a freelance religion writer based in Nashville.



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'BOOTS ON THE GROUND'

As military recruiters gain a foothold in Christian schools, grassroots activists across the nation are sounding the alarm.

SUMMER IS THE season for high school football practice. Two years ago, the players at Central Catholic High School in Portland, Ore., got a different kind of coaching, brought in by head coach Steve Pyne. For the first time, U.S. Army recruiters would serve as volunteers to run the football team through their strength and conditioning paces—helping them prepare for the annual “Holy War” matchup against archrival Jesuit High School.

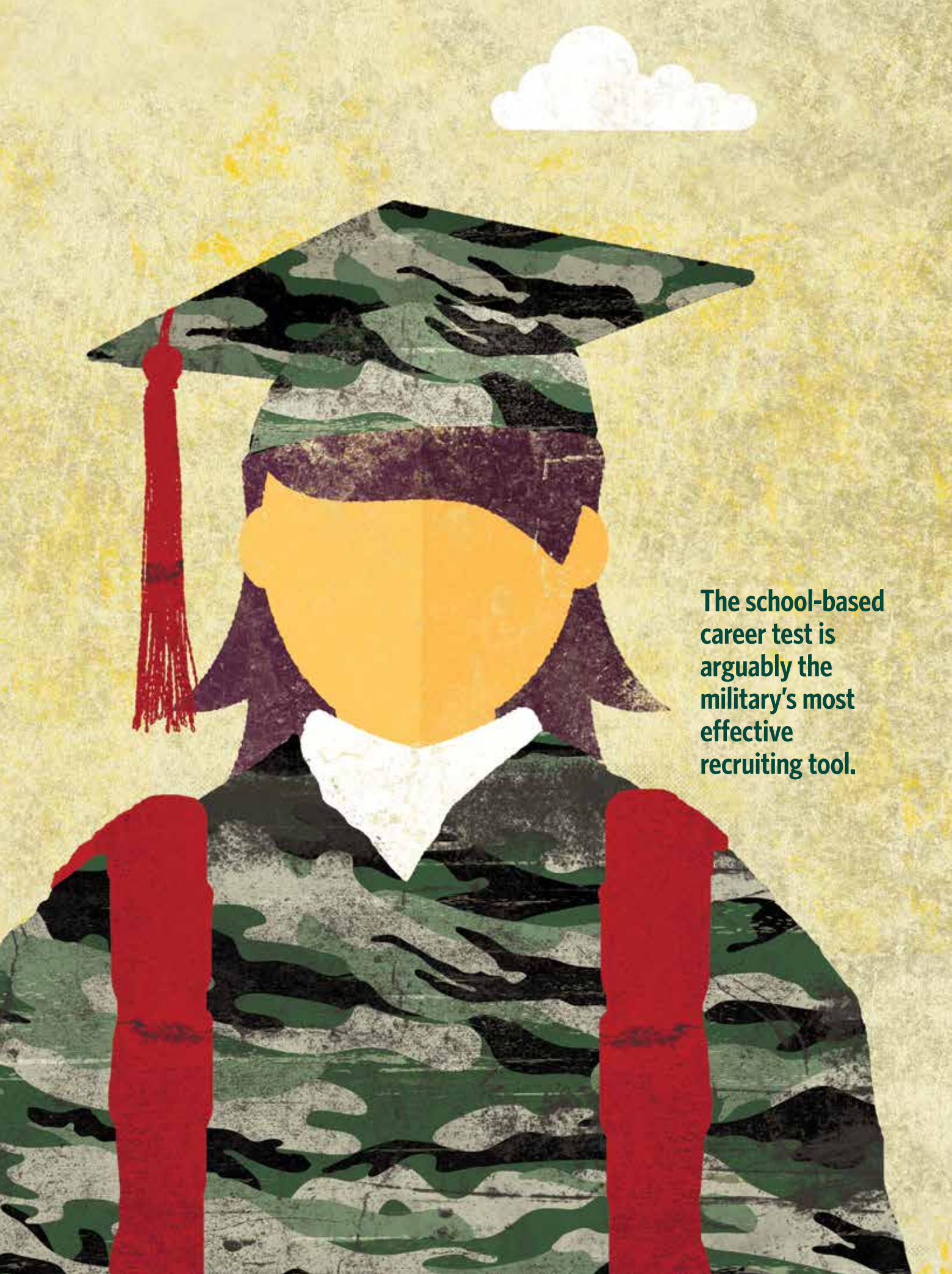
According to an article in the U.S. Army’s monthly *Recruiter Journal*, the Army “footprint” for the big game included a Humvee parked outside the stadium and a pre-kick-off event in which local recruiters placed “unit patch decals from various Army divisions” onto players’ helmets.

“Not once at practice did we talk about the Army,” said one of the recruiters. “It wasn’t about the Army. It was about how we can integrate ourselves into the community in a way the community will accept us and not feel like we are a threat.”

In recent years, the Pentagon’s military recruiting capabilities have experienced a quantum leap—including unprecedented access to Christian high schools. Not only are military recruiters using football to gain entry into parochial schools, but they are increasingly relying on military testing in schools to access students’ private information without parental consent.

Over the past 10 years, the New York Civil Liberties Union, Rutgers School of Law, Child Soldiers International, and other organizations have raised troubling questions about military presence in schools. In Christian schools, the level of suspicion ought to be much higher, since the stakes are not only ethical but spiritual. “Since war is about the mass infliction of death and suffering on children of God,” wrote Catholic Bishop John Michael Botean in 2003, “Christians can enter into it and fight in it only if the war in question strictly meets all the criteria of the just war theory, and only if these same standards are likewise meticulously observed in the course of fighting the war.” What’s more, the critical thinking skills—so often hailed by educational progressives—that are needed to make these essential moral decisions may be undermined by what theologian Reinhold Niebuhr decried as the “military mind,” which “makes unthinking obedience” the greatest good in the “hierarchy of virtues.”

HOW DID WE get here? A little known provision in the 2001 No Child Left Behind act requires “Armed Forces recruiter access to students and student recruiting information.” It mandates that military recruiters have the same access to high schools as is generally provided to colleges. Prior to this, according to the Pentagon, high schools had barred recruiters from their



The school-based
career test is
arguably the
military's most
effective
recruiting tool.

premises on more than 19,000 occasions in 1999 alone. While some high school administrators likely refused recruiters' requests because they believed it was inappropriate for educational institutions to promote military service, many contend that the Pentagon's numbers were grossly exaggerated. And yet, based largely on these claims, the provision was added to NCLB to open up a treasure trove of data for the military.

In addition to access to high school students' names, addresses, and telephone numbers, the Pentagon is also able to use data brokers, social media analysis, and information purchased from yearbook and class ring companies to provide military recruiting services with a virtual tour of what's going on in Johnny or Jane's head and, if there's a boyfriend or girlfriend, what he or she thinks of the decision regarding enlistment.

Still, recruiters have had a much harder time reaching the 3.5 million students who attend U.S. parochial and religious schools, what one unclassified Army document describes as an "untapped market." As a result, recruiters have honed creative ways of reaching this population.

The example from Central Catholic in Portland is not uncommon. In the 2009-10 school year, one Milwaukee recruiter used his 15-hour-per-week job as a volunteer coach to mentor—and eventually enlist—five football players from Pius XI High School. (Pope Pius XI, the 1930s "peace and justice" pope, would have been appalled.)

In 2009, the Army's Southern California Recruiting Battalion worked with community leaders and the marketing firm Weber Shandwick to coordinate a Catholic school outreach campaign.

In 2011, an advertising specialist at the Columbus (Ohio) Army Recruiting Battalion told the *Recruiter Journal* that to "penetrate parochial high schools" his soldiers participate in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. "As we go down the street with our color guard and Army-branded vehicles," he said, "we're talking to the parochial audience."

WHILE "BOOTS ON the ground" in parochial schools is one part of the military recruitment strategy, it is much more effective to get "inside the heads" of high school

students. And that leads to the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB).

The ASVAB, the military's standardized entrance exam, was developed by the Department of Defense in the 1960s. In 1968, the DOD began administering the test in U.S. high schools and, after the draft was ended, began using it specifically for military recruiting. According to the DOD, the exam brought in about 9 percent of total enlistments in the 2006-07 school year.

The ASVAB Career Exploration Program (CEP) is the innocuous-sounding version

Military recruiters are using football to gain entry into Christian high schools.

that's currently administered in about 12,000 U.S. high schools to more than 660,000 students each year. The "career test" enables recruiters to assess the intellectual capabilities, career interests, and mechanical aptitude of a student to create a precise profile. As one Army training manual noted, data obtained from the CEP "provides information you can't get from any other list."

Often the test is given at school without parental knowledge or consent. Many high schools make the test mandatory. And existing federal safeguards set in place to protect student privacy (such as the Family Educational Rights Protection Act) do not apply to these military tests.

The school-based career test is arguably the military's most effective recruiting tool. Combined with regular recruiter presence in the schools and the student contact information garnered through No Child Left Behind, the Career Exploration Program gives military recruiters the biggest bang for their buck.

In parochial and religious schools, where most students are college-bound, the test has not been as widespread as it now is in the public school system. However, our analysis of data obtained through the Freedom of Information Act shows that there were approximately 450 parochial and religious high schools (including 113 Catholic schools) administering the test to more than 11,000 students in the 2012-13 school year.

Why don't more parents, teachers, and students know about the military's role in

administering the test? After examining the websites of nearly 100 such schools, we discovered that no sites clearly identified the test as a recruitment tool or mentioned that student data would be transferred to military recruiters. Instead, these websites carried upbeat promotional messages often lifted verbatim from Pentagon sources.

For instance, Mount St. Mary Catholic High School in Oklahoma City encourages students to take the test under the "College and Career Placement" section of its student handbook. Rather than accurately describing test proctors as military recruiters or DOD

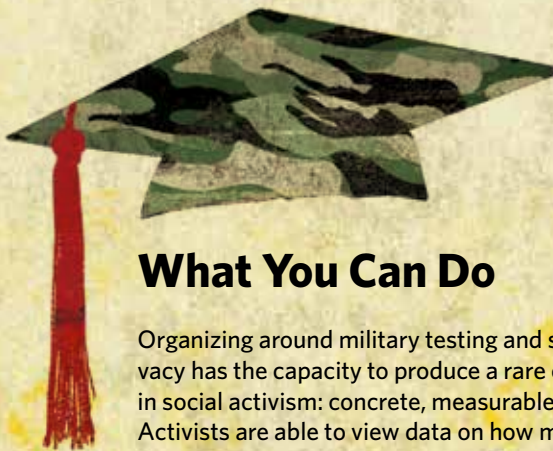
employees, Mount St. Mary's officials refer to them as "test administrators from the Federal Government."

At Newport Central Catholic in Newport, Ky., the test is given to all juniors every November. Last year 95 students took the test and had their test data forwarded to recruiters without parental consent.

MOST OF THE schools that administer the ASVAB don't know there's a way to give the test while also protecting student privacy. Military regulations give schools eight choices, or "options," regarding the release of ASVAB information. These range from Option 1, which permits results to be released to military recruiters seven days after being mailed to the student, to Option 8, which is the only one that protects student privacy and prevents data from being delivered to recruiters.

Since school officials are often unaware that the different release options exist, and because recruiters aren't going out of their way to tell them, grassroots campaigns have sprung up across the country to raise the alarm and press for change.

United under the umbrella of the National Coalition to Protect Student Privacy, which offers a searchable database of schools that administer the test and other resource material, these activists focus their public appeals around the principles of student privacy and parental consent. They support their claims with solid research, such as the set of "Best Practices for ASVAB-CEP Administration," released by Rutgers University Law School in 2013, showing that high school counselors have both legal and



professional responsibilities to ensure that student test information is not automatically released to military recruiters. Additionally, a dozen state offices of the American Civil Liberties Union have sent letters warning education officials that ASVAB testing violates student privacy.

Within the last few years, more than 2,000 of the 12,000 schools that administer the ASVAB have moved to select Option 8, including all schools in two states (Hawaii and Maryland) and school districts in New York City, Los Angeles, and other major cities, despite military efforts to defeat Option 8 initiatives.

Across the U.S., Option 8 selection has increased from covering about 1 percent of total students tested in 2005 to covering 15.5 percent during the 2012-13 school year.

WHILE THERE IS growing opposition to the use of the ASVAB-CEP in public schools, religious and parochial schools have been left behind in the organizing efforts. However, Catholic schools in particular have a unique religious liberty question that can and should be raised about the military's footprint in parochial schools.

In 2001, the Vatican ratified Article 3.3 of the U.N. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. This international commitment requires that recruitment practices involving minors must be voluntary and carried out with the informed consent of the person's parents or legal guardians. Accordingly, U.S. Catholic schools could press for religious liberty by using the Vatican's ratification of the treaty to push back on military intrusion and federal enforcement of NCLB. But when we brought this to the attention of officials at the National Catholic Education Association—a professional organization representing Catholic educators—they said that all ASVAB-related decisions rested at the individual school level.

Some Catholic schools, however, have received the message. For example, when Bishop Hartley High School in Columbus, Ohio, required its junior class to take the test in 2013, it prohibited the release of student data to recruiters by selecting Option 8. A notice on the school's website correctly states that data will be kept with the school.

What You Can Do

Organizing around military testing and student privacy has the capacity to produce a rare commodity in social activism: concrete, measurable results. Activists are able to view data on how many students take the ASVAB from year to year and track progress.

1. The National Coalition to Protect Student Privacy's website provides the most up-to-date data on ASVAB testing in every state and territory, including how many students in each state are taking the test and which "release option" schools have chosen.

2. Civil liberties groups are natural allies in this work, but it is just as important to reach out to parent-teacher associations and teachers' unions.

3. Talk directly to school principals and guidance counselors, educating them on Option 8 and urging them to select it for their school.

4. After securing local victories, move on to state-wide efforts. Some states have found legislators willing to sponsor an ASVAB Option 8 bill, similar to those passed in Hawaii and Maryland.

—Patrick Elder and Seth Kershner

However, Bishop Hartley is in the minority. Nationally, only 19.6 percent of all parochial and religious school students taking the ASVAB test in 2012-13 selected Option 8.

Meanwhile, back at Portland's Central Catholic, one of its standout players was selected to participate in the annual U.S. Army All-American Bowl, a national football showcase that's been described as both the "crown jewel" in Army marketing strategy and a "springboard to bolster recruiting efforts." Also, a coach is selected each year to lead the squad of the nation's top high school players. In 2013, the squad was led by a man who by then was quite well known in Army recruiting circles: Central Catholic's football coach, Steve Pyne. ■

Patrick Elder, director of the National Coalition to Protect Student Privacy, teaches religion and literature at a Catholic school in Maryland. Seth Kershner is a freelance writer working on a book about military counter-recruitment activism.

Catholic Sisters Are Redefining Leadership

A NEW MODEL of leadership that's been refined in the fires of change and conflict is emerging from U.S. religious women.

In June, the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies, along with Solidarity with Sisters, invited 150 people to Catholic University for an opportunity to discuss the model of leadership that has developed in Catholic women's communities around the world over the last 50 years since Vatican II. The event coincided with the release of *Spiritual Leadership for Challenging Times*, an anthology of 10 addresses

go "deeper into life, into service, into God," as Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, writes? "The purpose of leadership is not to make the present bearable," writes Sister Joan, but "to make the future possible." This kind of leadership is measured and evaluated by the degree to which the people around the leaders are inspired to effective, resilient change.

2 Leadership conscience is formed in community. "Every part of the system has a piece of the truth and its part to play," says Sister Marie. Leaders must shift their perspective from hierarchies to holistic systems and listen deeply to the needs, affections, tensions, and desires of the whole body. Good leadership fosters prophetic vision. The prophetic life prompts communal wisdom and action, which is then organized by effective leadership. For the formation of a communal conscience, leaders must sit together in silence and invite wisdom in.

3 Leaders "befriend the wind," as Sister Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, puts it. Leaders learn, and help the community to understand, what unseen forces and influences shape them. How can these forces be turned to the advantage of mission? "The future depends, as it always has, on the mysterious work of God's providence in our regard," writes Sister Doris. "But the future also depends, as it always has, on how we answer the depth questions ... which have to be answered in every time and place." Leaders set the tone for minority opinions by normalizing contrasting viewpoints; asking "what might be reasons we should not move in this direction?"

4 Science has shifted its focus from "matter" to "energy," which informs how leadership is practiced

effectively. Leaders must understand energy as power. "Countercultural, mutual, relational, it is the authentic power integral to the transformation of our church and of our world. It is the power of sisterhood," writes Sister Mary Ann Zollmann, BVM. True power is energy that bears fruit, not ascendancy over others or even influence to effect external change. "The group leads together," says Sister Marie, "and the role of the leader is to articulate and fine tune the leadings of the group," including solidarity with the poor and marginalized, because this relationship informs and transforms leadership. "All leaders must have the poor, voiceless, and marginalized as their spiritual directors."

5 Leadership skillfully navigates shifts. "The most critical issues facing leaders today do not have answers. They are complex questions that must be lived into," says Sister Marie. Superhero leadership is no longer the right tool for the job. Process is primary, results are secondary, because process builds creativity and experimentation into the system. It trains leaders and builds confidence as it goes along. In times of tremendous human change, movements arise that create the conditions for transformation. "The role of the leader is assisting the body to have the imagination to bring the group into the future it's headed into," says Sister Marie.

Our times require mature spiritual leadership. Our questions are too complex for one answer. Our faith has given us the wisdom, spirit, and living witnesses we need to step boldly—together—into the future. ■

Rose Marie Berger, a Sojourners senior associate editor, is a Catholic peace activist and poet.



True power is energy that bears fruit.

given by Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) presidents.

Catholic sisters are emerging as leaders ahead of their times. From Sister Simone Campbell, SSS, and Nuns on the Bus to Catholic Health Association CEO Sister Carol Keehan, DC, who helped pass the Affordable Care Act, to former LCWR president Sister Pat Farrell, OSF, who practiced authentic spiritual leadership in the face of the Vatican's ongoing investigation of that organization (an investigation that Pope Francis should have laid quietly to rest, but has not), religious women are getting notice for their thoughtful, faithful leadership in the face of withering criticism and their own communities' dramatic changes.

What are the marks of this new leadership?

1 Leadership must begin with facing oneself. Sister Marie McCarthy, SP, calls this taking "a long, loving look at what is." Developing a prayerful, contemplative consciousness allows illusions and judgments to fall away. What changes are needed so that we can



Lunamarina

mitzvah

for miriam

the young rabbi, earnest and intense,
forgot to read your requested scripture passage
then, a shovel had to be asked for,
so each of us could cover you
with three mounds of warm earth
your daughter fussed a little but later went for shiva at the house
the sermon was almost too simple:
the greatest good deed is to bury the dead
for they cannot thank you
with these words, like grace before a meal
I was taught what I thought I knew—
invite those who are blind, the lame ...
and, in so doing,
you will discover worship at your table
when you welcome as a guest the throwaways of this world

Sister Lou Ella Hickman, IWBS, is a spiritual director in Corpus Christi, Texas.



By Jason Storbakken

The Evolution of **Cody ChesnuTT**

Following a musician's journey through the rough and the redeemed.

.....
PRIOR TO MY conversion to Christianity, I was the roving reggae reporter for *High Times*, a magazine dedicated to marijuana culture. I also wrote music reviews for *NY Press*, Virgin Records, and various other publications.

One of my favorite artists from the early 2000s was Cody Chesnutt (he spells his name with two capital Ts at the end), an independent recording artist popularly known for his hit song “Seed 2.0,” a soulful rock and hip-hop hybrid released in 2002 with The Roots.

Chesnutt's musical debut was a lo-fi soul and rock-and-roll album titled *The Headphone Masterpiece*. It was a double disc (this was still the heyday of compact discs) that he recorded on a 4-track recorder in the bedroom of his Los Angeles apartment. He played all the instruments—guitar, bass, keyboard, and organ. The sound quality and lyrical content are both intentionally gritty.

Headphone quickly became the soundtrack to my college years. I was a reveler, filled with hypersexual bravado and abundant egotism, and Chesnutt's music reinforced and undergirded my misdirected youthful zeal. His lyrics were unrepentantly misogynistic, and his strong sense of self pervaded each track. He exploited

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 An excerpt by Reggie L. Williams



eventually dropped from the label. The band fell apart, but he still had all the recording equipment in his apartment.

Thus, alone in his bedroom, *The Headphone Masterpiece* was birthed. He was, and continues to be, a fiercely independent recording artist. After recording the album, he shopped it around to different record labels, but no one was buying—some record producers thought it was a demo and wanted to retool it, but he felt the music was complete—so he made it available through his

Something strikingly transformative occurred to Chesnutt. He began to attend church; his social consciousness deepened.

website and later released it on his own label, Ready, Set, Go!

Headphone made some waves, but received no real acclaim. It charted for just one week on the Billboard 200. It was destined to remain an underground album until Questlove, drummer and frontman of The Roots, heard the album and quickly moved to re-record Chesnutt's song "The Seed" (renamed "Seed 2.0") as the second single from their 2002 album *Phrenology*.

Chesnutt earned the worldwide exposure he was seeking, he was an ascending star, record labels were at his beck and call, and yet something profound happened—he walked away. In fact, it might be better said that he repented, he changed his mind about music, life, relationships, and the message he was promoting.

WHEN I RETURNED to my faith almost 10 years ago, I too felt a conviction to change my ways, my work, and the message that my life promoted. I stopped writing for *High Times* and took a job in the editorial department at *Forbes*, but soon realized that *Forbes* was no better, and so I joined a small nonprofit in the South Bronx called Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice. I continued to listen to music by Amadou & Mariam, Thomas Mapfumo and the Blacks Unlimited, Salif

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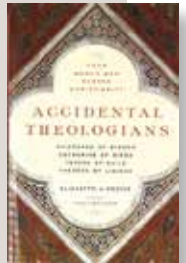
his infidelity and womanizing in his music, at times in a prophetic way, such as in "My Women, My Guitars," which he opens with incredibly crude lyrics, but later croons with utmost vulnerability: "Man, something's been killing me. My women, my guitars. I've been living hard. My breakdown is on the way. I know my breakdown is on the way. So I get up on my feet. Falling back on my knees to pray."

Chesnutt was raised in Atlanta listening to Sam Cooke and Michael Jackson, among others. He was part of the Atlanta music scene in the early 1990s and studied business at a Florida college for a while, but decided to move to Los Angeles where his breakthrough came by writing songs for Death Row Records, home to Snoop Dogg and the late Tupac Shakur. Chesnutt even wrote a song for the movie *Gridlock'd*, starring Shakur. His experimental rock band, The Crosswalk, signed with Hollywood Records (a Disney subsidiary), but they were

New & Noteworthy

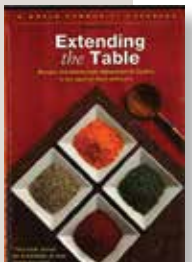
CHURCH MAKERS

In *Accidental Theologians: Four Women Who Shaped Christianity*, Elizabeth A. Dreyer delves into the theology of four female saints of the Catholic Church, Hildegard of Bingen, Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, and Thérèse of Lisieux, describing their impact on the church in their times and today. Franciscan Media



GLOBAL FEAST

The revised edition of *Extending the Table* cookbook (first released in 1991) includes new dishes, regional menus, and more photos, as well as prayers and stories. It is part of the World Community Cookbook series commissioned by Mennonite Central Committee, and royalties support MCC's work. Herald Press

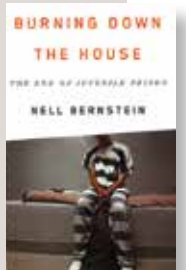


WORD TO DEED

With humor and blunt honesty, Eugene Cho, the founder of One Day's Wages, aimed at alleviating extreme global poverty, writes about taking justice from buzzword to reality in *Overrated: Are We More in Love with the Idea of Changing the World Than Actually Changing the World?* David C Cook

JAILED CHILDREN

Drawing on more than 20 years of relationship with incarcerated children, award-winning journalist Nell Bernstein traces the history of juvenile incarceration and looks at current—and often abusive and counter-productive—conditions in *Burning Down the House: The End of Juvenile Prison*. The New Press



A Teachable Moment

IN 1961, President Eisenhower warned us about the threat to democracy posed by what he dubbed the military-industrial complex. Today we need an Eisenhower to sound the alarm about another threat to our capacity for self-rule: the educational-industrial complex.

The military-industrial complex gained power because it promised to protect Americans from the spectral threat of Soviet domination. The educational-industrial complex has arisen in response to the fear of economic domination by better-educated populations. But the policies it promotes could leave our population increasingly unable to think for itself or counter the saturating influence of propaganda—whether commercial or political.

What I mean by the educational-industrial complex is that vast network of companies and institutions with a vested interest in education policy: the testing companies, textbook publishers, software developers, technology peddlers,



Author Richard Wright

corner of the higher education world. At our small state university, faculty members are regularly subjected to lengthy presentations from hired consultants deployed to update our pedagogy—or at least our ed-speak jargon. For instance, last year all teaching faculty had to submit measurable “Student Learning Outcomes,” unfortunately abbrevi-

Maybe young black men with transformed intellects isn't what the educational-industrial complex wants.

“for-profit” schools, and the armies of high-powered “consultants” that circle U.S. schools like vultures picking the last dollars from the emaciated bones of their budgets. All of these players push an agenda of standardized testing and skills-based curricula that is crowding out both content knowledge (outside of science and math) and the slow, labor-intensive process of reading and discussion that produces the capacity for critical thinking. In the end, we’ll have a deeply ignorant and complacent people who will do as they’re told and buy what they’re sold.

I see this narrowing of educational horizons even in my little

ated “SLO,” for every course we teach. When most of our “outcomes” were deemed “unmeasurable,” a SLO consultant was loosed upon us. From his presentation I learned that an “outcome” was really the same thing that, a decade ago, another consultant called learning “objectives.” In fact, in the middle, our SLO guy started using the two terms interchangeably, leading me to suspect that he had simply changed the jargon in an old presentation and missed a few spots when he did.

The rage for “measurability” and “quantification” seems to be the

nuclear arsenal of the educational-industrial complex. But our most important educational experiences are immeasurable. They are the “aha” moments when, for example, we apprehend the ties that bind us to all other humans, or recognize the big questions of meaning and purpose that lay beneath all our day-to-day political catfights. It’s hard to quantify those experiences. But you know them when you see them.

A few years ago, I taught a special topics class about 20th century U.S. autobiography. We had read Richard Wright’s *Black Boy*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and President Obama’s *Dreams from My Father* and were halfway through *The Long Loneliness* by Dorothy Day when, skimming through the student reading journals, I came upon this passage from a young man who generally wore his cap backwards and looked a lot like Spike Lee’s character Mookie in *Do the Right Thing*:

Reading these four books has made me realize how important liberal arts education is ... I just started reading this book, and I can feel it transform my mentality ... I’m starting to understand myself better through reading. It’s this overwhelming feeling of “I knew it!” or “I was thinking the same thing!” It ... makes me want to run and tell somebody about the salvation of learning. It really is a beautiful thing.

But then again, maybe young black men with “transformed mentalities,” who feel the thrill of their own aroused intellects, isn’t what the educational-industrial complex wants. Maybe that’s what it fears. ■



Danny Duncan Collum teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort. He is the author of the novel *White Boy*.

Continued from Page 39

Keïta, and others, but I turned from other music that promoted lifestyles that felt negative. That is when I realized I could no longer listen to Cody Chesnutt.

Little did I know he too was experiencing a deep conversion and his music would make a 180-degree turn in regard to its lyrical content.

I recently had the opportunity to hear Chesnutt perform at the world famous Apollo Theater in Harlem and talk with him afterward.

Soon after the release of *Headphone*, Chesnutt moved from L.A. to Tallahassee, Fla., toured infrequently, and recommitted himself to his wife. They recently celebrated 20 years of marriage. In 2003, a year after the release of *Headphone*, they had their first child, a daughter—they now have two children. It was during this time that something strikingly transformative occurred to Chesnutt. He began to attend church; his social consciousness deepened.

There was a decade of near silence; little to no music was released, but deep creative stirrings were occurring in Chesnutt.

In 2010, he released one EP, *Black Skin, No Value*, which, according to Chesnutt, “is a bridge body of work that speaks to an issue that is still very prevalent in our society—the value that is placed on black life.” He is not an activist in the traditional sense, yet he has become an agent for social change through his music. He released a rough cut of a sorrowful song indicting George Zimmerman in the murder of Trayvon Martin. Never one to mince words, he sings, “Zimmerman, you’re a murderer. You killed this kid. You killed this kid.”

In 2012, Chesnutt fully returned to the music scene with the release of *Landing On A Hundred*. Chesnutt was just coming out of his 20s when he recorded *Headphone*. *Landing* was recorded in his early 40s. The sound quality and lyrics are more refined, more mature, and infused with themes of redemption and restoration, indicative of his own transformation. Unlike *Headphone*, *Landing* contains no explicit language and no misogyny. Instead he sings praises to fidelity on tracks such as “Love is More Than a Wedding Day.” Chesnutt explains that the album title refers to, “Landing on something truthful. Landing on something



Brendan Gleeson
in *Calvary*

POSSIBLE GRACE

WHAT'S A GOOD priest for? So asks *Calvary*, the second feature film from writer-director John Michael McDonagh, rooting itself in Ireland's coastal landscape, centering on a pastor threatened with scapegoat-retributive murder from a grievously sinned-against parishioner. Its vibe owes a great deal to the quiet reflection of films such as *Jesus of Montreal* and *Au Hasard Balthazar* (in which a donkey evokes the love and wounds of Christ), and the archetypal Westerns *High Noon* and *Unforgiven*. Brendan Gleeson plays a priest who was drawn into the church after his wife's death, which allows us the rare experience of seeing a cinematic Catholic priest who is both a parent to his flock and to a beloved daughter, who feels somewhat abandoned by his commitment to the church.

Gleeson has the uncanny ability to hold his massive frame as both solid—almost concrete—and vulnerable. Knowing that everyone is both broken and breaker, his Father James is healing on behalf of a flawed institution, although he doesn't confuse vocation with a job. His bishop's response to a request for help is “I'm not saying anything,” reminding me of Daniel Berrigan's challenge to religious hierarchies, heard at a public meeting in Dublin in the run-up to the Iraq war: “In Vietnam, they had nothing to say, and said nothing; now, they have nothing to say, and they're saying it.”

Father James understands the

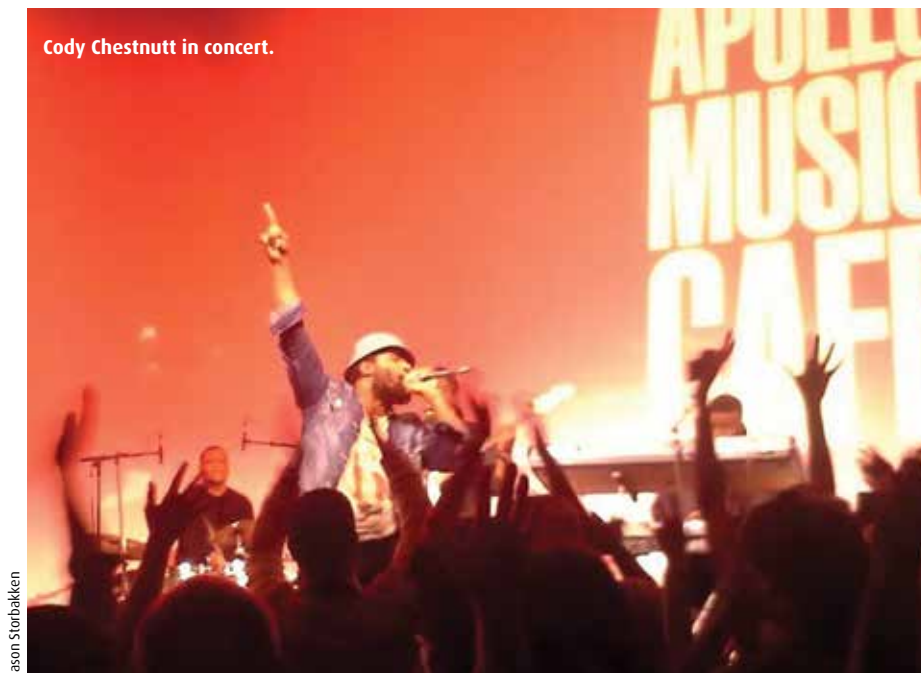
difference between stewarding power and grabbing it (one obvious signal of his goodness), and he is up to his neck in the community, running the gamut from friendship with an American writer looking for inspiration in the land of his presumed ancestors to a visit with a former pupil whose own inner darkness has led him to do monstrous things.

But the core question in *Calvary* is the one raised by the parishioner who wants to kill the priest as an act of pure vengeance for the suffering caused him by another son of the church. He wants to kill a “good priest” to purge something within himself and teach the universe a lesson. And in this sense, he is only doing what the god of retribution demands—in the same way that capital punishment demands that victims become perpetrators.

In a culture that does not understand the difference between accountability and vengeance, and between justice and restoration, the path for victims of sexual violence to become integrated survivors is not easily found. *Calvary* knows this, and it is a rare and beautiful film, one that tells the truth, or at least asks for it honestly. It's a story about despair that produces hope in the possibility—even the inevitability—of grace. ■

Gareth Higgins is a northern Irish writer living in North Carolina. He co-presents thefilmstalk.com and soultelegram.com.

Cody Chestnutt in concert.



Jason Storbakken

purposeful, something meaningful.”

Funded via Kickstarter, much of *Landing* was recorded in Memphis at the Royal Studios, the same studio where Al Green, whose conversion in some ways parallels Chestnutt’s experience, recorded some of his most famed songs. Chestnutt even used the same ribbon microphone that Green used for “Let’s Stay Together” and “Love and Happiness.”

Chestnutt’s first track on the new album, “Til I Met Thee,” lays the ground. He sings, “I was a dead man. I was asleep. I was a stranger in a foreign land til I met thee, Lord.” Redemption and rebirth is a theme throughout the album.

WHEN I RETURNED to my faith, I was eager to discover quality Christian music but, unfortunately, it seemed most of it was over-produced or contained lyrics that were shallow, seemingly self-centered, or aggressively victorious. Personally, I’m seldom seeking the God who conquers and dominates, but one who heals and liberates, forgives and redeems.

Chestnutt strikes a balance on *Landing*, recognizing that there is promise of redemption and second chances for each of us while simultaneously taking the risk of being vulnerable. Of particular note is “Everybody’s Brother,” which is written from three perspectives—a crack addict, a gambler, and a

womanizer. It is part autobiographical—specifically the womanizing—but not the crack: That is based on an uncle of Chestnutt’s. He sings: “I used to smoke crack back in the day / I used to gamble rent money and lose / I used to dog the nice ladies, used to swindle friends / But now I’m teaching kids in Sunday school and I’m not turning back.”

His show at the Apollo was electric. He performed material mostly from *Landing*, but for the first time in more than a decade, Chestnutt recently began incorporating into his live performances select songs from *Headphone* that are, as he said, “in the same spirit where I currently reside.”

Chestnutt’s new album is not overly religious, yet the divine is sensed in each track. Twitter user John Kelli tweeted, “If you’re a young black man it is imperative that you own *Landing On A Hundred*.” It might be added that if you have stumbled and struggled, been down and out, but still hope, *Landing* is a must listen for you. ■

Jason Storbakken is cofounder of the Radical Living Christian community in Brooklyn, N.Y., and chapel director of The Bowery Mission. His first book, *Radical Spirituality: Repentance, Resistance, Revolution (Orbis) releases in September. In March 2014, Chestnutt released Landing On A Hundred + B-Sides & Remixes, including new songs and a remix by Questlove.*

Reviewed by Anne Colamosca

AN AMBIGUOUS POLITICAL PROPHET

The Kennan Diaries, edited by Frank Costigliola. W. W. Norton & Company.

THE KENNAN DIARIES, carefully edited by Frank Costigliola, a University of Connecticut historian, covers an amazing and sometimes disturbing 88-year period of personal journal-writing by George F. Kennan, who became the most famous diplomat-intellectual of the 20th century.

Born in 1904 (he died in 2005) Kennan, a Milwaukee native, grew up in an upper-class Scotch-Irish Presbyterian family with three older sisters and a father who was a tax attorney.

After graduating from Princeton, Kennan became a Foreign Service officer with the State Department, eventually serving in posts throughout Europe. But Kennan’s first love was Russia. He wrote in his diary that “he had a mystical connection to Leningrad, as though he had once lived there.” He was offered a three-year university stint in Berlin by the State Department—Kennan’s boss wanted him to be educated like a pre-Bolshevik Russian gentleman. Kennan’s grasp of the Russian language and history became exceptional. Together with his prodigious analytical skills, it would be the foundation of his brilliant career.

After 20 years abroad, Kennan fired off his famous 5,540-word “Long Telegram” on Feb. 22, 1946, from Moscow to Washington. Soon afterward, in July 1947, he wrote another piece in *Foreign Affairs* under the byline “X.” In the two pieces he said that the Soviets under Stalin would try aggressively to expand, but that the U.S. should not employ military means to stop them. Instead, Kennan advocated “containment,” heavily monitoring the Russians with hard-headed diplomacy and tough talk. He also stated that the Soviet Union would eventually self-destruct.

Kennan became famous overnight and was appointed to the State Department’s U.S. Policy Planning Staff. He also worked closely with Secretary of State George Marshall in developing the Marshall Plan,

which put Europe back on the road to recovery.

Containment became the guiding foreign policy approach toward the Soviet Union during the long Cold War period until 1989, when that country broke apart, as Kennan had predicted. But over the years Kennan became increasingly angry that his definition of containment was reworked by Washington defense hawks to justify huge increases in U.S. military spending. He was a passionate opponent of McCarthyism. He became a strong voice for disarmament and vigorously decried the Vietnam War, working with William Sloane Coffin. He was dubbed a “dove.” In 1997, Kennan was deeply disturbed when President Bill Clinton expanded the NATO Alliance eastward to include Poland, Hungary, and the Czech

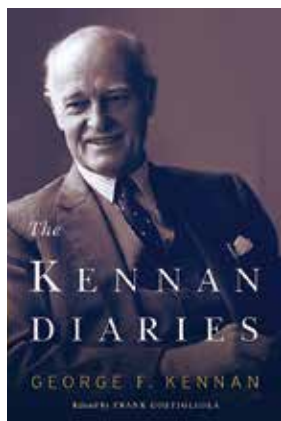
Republic, protesting that “this would provoke Russia into a new Cold War.” Clinton ignored Kennan’s concerns.

Kennan also had strong views on Ukraine. “In 1948, he wrote a memo saying that Ukraine’s role was similar to that of our own Midwest,” said Costigliola

in a recent phone interview. “He felt that Ukraine was just as important to Russia, because of its key agricultural economy, as the Midwest was to the U.S. I think Kennan would have approved of President Obama’s handling of the current situation—sanctions and tough talk, but not military action.”

But this brilliant political prophet also had a dark side. Kennan helped set up the “covert operations unit” of the fledgling Central Intelligence Agency. “Probably the worst mistake I ever made in government was to accept responsibility for giving this sort of guidance to CIA,” wrote Kennan, who was not involved with the CIA after 1950, according to Costigliola. The CIA went on to manipulate elections abroad, topple democracies, and plot assassinations.

Kennan’s diary is also filled with vitriolic remarks about the U.S. and its people.



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Kennan writes, for example, that the states of California, Texas, and Florida (with large Latino populations) are “places where not one single thing of any importance is being said or done.” He makes similar comments about Italians and blacks. He has been often criticized for writing little about the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust even though he was serving during these years in the heart of the war-ravaged region. (He had not predicted that Hitler would come to power.)

Kennan remains a complicated figure. Costigliola, who also wrote *Roosevelt's Last Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War*, has written that “the Cold War was not inevitable,” and Kennan’s legendary role in it will be closely analyzed by generations of scholars. ■

Anne Colamosca is a former staff writer at Business Week and has written for many national magazines and newspapers.

Reviewed by Julie Polter

TAKING THE LONG ROAD HOME

***Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus,* by C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison. IVP Books.**

HERE'S WHAT *Slow Church* is not: A how-to manual with five easy steps to make your congregation more thoughtful. A celebration of how using the word “community” often on your church website will multiply your pledge and attendance numbers. An ode to really, really long worship services.

Rather, *Slow Church* explores being church in a way that emphasizes deep engagement in local people and places, quality over quantity, and in all things taking the long view—understanding individuals and congregations as participants in the unfolding drama of all creation. Authors C. Christopher Smith and John Pattison are self-proclaimed “amateurs,” insofar as they are writers-editors and

lay leaders, not professional pastors, theologians, or congregational consultants. But this book is richly informed by their experience in their own church contexts (Englewood Christian Church in a gritty neighborhood in Indianapolis for Smith; an evangelical Quaker meeting in small-town Oregon for Pattison), conversations with other church communities, and close reading of classic and contemporary literature on culture, Christian community, scripture, and spirituality.

The book’s name is a reference to the International Slow Food Movement, which resists the homogenizing and industrializing effects of globalization on food. Smith and Pattison cite sociologist George Ritzer’s

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Jane McGonigal is today’s leading speaker on the application of game-design to the real world. She argues that game designers are experts in making difficult tasks engaging, and that we should draw on their smarts as we frame the challenges of our time. She is currently an advisor and affiliate researcher with the Institute for the Future in Palo Alto, California.



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Excerpt by Reggie L. Williams

Bonhoeffer's Harlem Renaissance

During his 1930-31 fellowship at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer joined his African American classmate Albert Fisher as a regular attendee at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem.

WHEN BONHOEFFER entered Harlem with Fisher, he met a counternarrative to the white racist fiction of black subhumanity. The New Negro movement radically redefined the public and private characterization of black people. A seminal moment in African American history had arrived, and all of Bonhoeffer's descriptions of his involvement in African American life during his Sloane Fellowship year occurred during this critical movement. He turned 25 that February. Bonhoeffer was experiencing that critical moment in African American history while he was still young and impressionable.

The New Negro, a book containing a collection of essays, was edited by one of the leading intellectual architects of the movement, Alain Locke. The New Negro, as Locke and his authors appropriated the term, described the embrace of a contradictory, assertive black self-image in Harlem to deflect the negative, dehumanizing historical depictions of black people. The New Negro made demands, not concessions: "demands for a new social order, demands that blacks fight back against terror and violence, demands that blacks reconsider new notions of beauty, demands that Africa be freed from the bonds of imperialism." Bonhoeffer knew the movement by the descriptor New Negro, but James Weldon Johnson preferred to describe the movement as the Harlem Renaissance ... as a rebirth of black people rather than something completely new. ...

Bonhoeffer entered Harlem and connected with new friends and ministry partners. He shared their disdain for the injustices leveled against their people, and he could empathize with their demands for dignity, as Germany hoped

for a rebirth of their own dignity after the international humiliation associated with World War I. But in America, when Bonhoeffer entered Harlem, he crossed a color line that was meant to endow him with social esteem, access, and privileges that Fisher and every other person of color in the world did not have. In America, Bonhoeffer was white, and in his native Germany he would later recognize and translate his American experience of whiteness as the National Socialist references to *die Herrenvolk*, the master race.

Harlem Renaissance culture and theology were born from the experiences that African Americans had with white racist terrorism. Bonhoeffer immersed him-

self in Harlem and saw white America from the perspective of black "American outcasts." ... He witnessed a white American accommodation of religion and domination in the form of a white Christ. But with African Americans in Harlem, he did not find Christianity striving to accommodate itself to white supremacist civilized society, nor did he find the liberal Christian expression of the Berlin school of theology that trained him in Germany. In Harlem, Bonhoeffer finally heard something different. He encountered a black Christ as the subject of worship in a Christian dialogue about sin, grace, the love of God, and ultimate hope "in a form different from that to which we [Germans] are accustomed." ...

The "real point" of church and Christianity was apparent to Bonhoeffer in the church of the outcasts, where he heard about Jesus as the center of Christian devotion and where Jesus was celebrated "with captivating passion and vividness." ■

From Bonhoeffer's Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance, by Reggie L. Williams. Copyright © 2014 by Baylor University Press. Reprinted by arrangement with Baylor University Press. All rights reserved.

argument that fast-food principles, what he calls "McDonaldization"—marked by efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control—are taking over broad areas of culture in the U.S. and beyond. The authors see McDonaldization affecting churches as well, as church-growth methods and the pace of consumer culture push congregations to seek faster gratification and achieve business-inflected benchmarks. *Slow Church* is an argument to return to the countercultural

roots of the church, the ones that call it to be salt and leaven in the places it is planted. Smith and Pattison write:

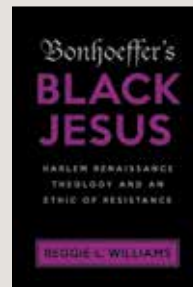
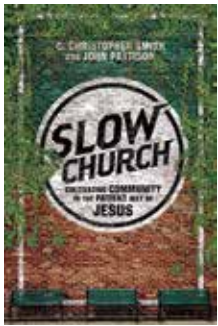
The Slow Food Movement is fundamentally about the richness of a common life with the neighbors who grow our food, prepare our

food, and share our food. Slow Church is a call for intentionality, an awareness of our mutual interdependence with all people and all creation, and an attentiveness to the world around us and the work God is doing in our very own neighborhoods.

Following a chapter offering their theological vision, the authors describe their proposal for the ethics, ecology, and economy for Slow Church. The main dimensions of the ethics are embracing the distinctiveness of your church's geographic and cultural place; stability; and patience in terms of slowing down and entering into the suffering of others and the brokenness of your own community.

Smith and Pattison outline ecology in Slow Church terms as emphasizing God's work to reconcile all things into wholeness (with an acknowledgement of all in ourselves and culture that tends toward fragmentation); work as an opportunity to participate in God's reconciling mission; and the importance of sabbath as intentional space to recognize God's gifts and presence. As they note, "we have to choose whether our approach to life will be primarily acquisitive or inquisitive; it can't be both. Sabbath, celebrated as a corporate spiritual discipline in our families and churches, can help us choose the latter."

Finally, the authors explore the ideals





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A RACE & POVERTY INITIATIVE FROM **sojourners**

of a Slow Church economy, rooted in the reminder that God deals in abundance, not scarcity: "Scarcity is a pretender to the throne. The law of God's household is life, not death; windfall, not shortfall; provision, not lack; and it is characterized by the radical immanence of God in the Spirit." To live into this, the church needs three practices: gratitude, generosity, and hospitality.

For me, the strength of this book is in its consistent encouragement to reorient ourselves through prayer, scripture, and practice to God's abundant gifts and well-spring of possibilities, even in broken places and circumstances. While the generative,

"We have to choose whether our approach to life will be primarily acquisitive or inquisitive; it can't be both."

imaginative space this creates doesn't work miracles (remember, we're talking slow) on tight church budgets, neighbors struggling with an exploitive landlord, or conflict in a community, it does open us up to material and spiritual resources we might otherwise overlook and remind us that transformation, though it may be a long time coming, is promised to us and all creation.

Slow Church includes stories from churches and communities putting these principles into practice, and implicitly and explicitly notes some of the flaws and cracks inevitable in any human endeavor (no matter how earnestly seeking God's partnership). Still, this isn't the book you'll go to, for example, to troubleshoot why consensus decision-making isn't working in your church, how to deal with burnout, or to get the full how-to on asset-mapping your neighborhood. But for inspiration you may find yourself returning to this gracefully written ode to God's wonders close at hand, with its vision for individuals and faith communities to savor that goodness and more fully incarnate Christ's love, wherever we have been called to be. ■

Julie Polter is a senior associate editor of Sojourners.

Kelly and Peter Shenk Koontz

Bio: Kelly and Peter Shenk Koontz spent the last three years serving in Kabul, Afghanistan, through a Mennonite Central Committee partner.

Website: MCC.org

1 What work were you doing in Afghanistan? We worked with a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partner in Kabul as Peacebuilding Project Managers. Our job was to integrate peacebuilding within different sectors of the partner organization, including adult education, community development, and many others. Day-to-day, this primarily meant developing curriculum and planning and conducting trainings for a variety of contexts—including rural community development teams and university students in Kabul.

2 How would you summarize the biggest challenges in Afghanistan today? In our opinion, the biggest challenge continues to be the ongoing violent conflict between the established government of Afghanistan and armed opposition groups, particularly the Taliban. The conflict in Afghanistan varies greatly by region, so some areas of the country experience relative stability while others experience violence on a regular basis. It is clear that there is no military solution to the conflict, and a negotiated agreement is the best way forward. However, many human rights groups fear that bringing the Taliban into the government will destroy important human rights gains—especially for women and minorities.

3 What's the situation for women and girls there? The gender dynamics and freedom for women change so much depending on the particular area in Afghanistan and the particular family or community that the women and girls come from. In Kabul and other urban areas of Afghanistan, things have opened up for women, as many more girls are attending school and many young women are going on to higher education. In rural areas, there are fewer opportunities for girls to go to school.



Kelly and Peter Shenk Koontz near Kabul.

There, the culture is much more conservative, which can be seen through dress (nearly all women wear burqas outside of the home), as well as school attendance (the number of girls in school is much lower).

4 What lessons would you offer Christians and faith-based groups doing bridge work with Muslims? The first thing we would do is reiterate the importance of what [the local people] are doing. In a place like Afghanistan, where nearly all the country is Muslim, it was so important to have conversations with Afghans. There are many negative stereotypes and images portrayed in the media on both sides [Christian and Muslim], and simply having conversations with one another was eye-opening for all of us. Fundamental to the whole process was listening to each other's stories and answering each other's questions without trying to change the other person's mind or argue with them.

5 What surprised you about serving in Afghanistan? In some ways, Afghanistan is a difficult place to live and work due to the ongoing war, violence, and conservative culture. At the same time, Afghanistan is a beautiful country

with amazing and resilient people. What struck us—at least in Kabul—was how normal life was. People work hard to support their families and build a brighter future for their children. Schoolgirls walk in groups and laugh on their way home from school. Schoolboys play soccer on the streets. Vendors sell fruit and vegetables in the bazaar, and ice cream sellers push carts with music playing through the dusty streets. People in Afghanistan and people in the U.S. are more similar than you might think.

6 What is your greatest fear and hope for Afghanistan? Our greatest fear would be that the current situation would get worse and ethnic divisions would turn into civil war, similar to the mid-1990s in Afghanistan. However, our hope—and belief—is that Afghanistan will find stability and peace. We hope for a negotiated settlement with the armed opposition that takes into account the concerns of human rights groups. We hope for sustainable development and job creation in a country that is still one of the poorest in the world. We hope and pray for a future generation of Afghans that will grow up in a country where war is a thing of the past.

—Interview by Rebecca Kraybill

Grace Royer

A 'Discipleship of Equals'

ACROSS DENOMINATIONS, Christians have attempted to build a more egalitarian and democratic ecclesiastical structure. The phrase "discipleship of equals," coined by the feminist theologian Elisabeth S. Fiorenza, suggests that a community of Jesus' followers cannot tolerate an absolute, centralizing power that justifies a relationship of dominance and subordination.

Yet, while Christians continue to challenge hierarchical structures in the church, we also acknowledge that a discipleship of equals will not be established simply by removing the hierarchy. The church is enmeshed in a concrete reality of everyday life, filled with a web of power relations that are neither fixed nor necessarily top-down.

Power relations experienced within the church are often inconspicuous. They take the form of microaggressions, subtle insults against other members because of gender, sexual orientation, race, class, and ability status. What is even more hurtful is that these insults are often disguised as "caring," as when someone perverts a prayer request into gossip. The experience of the powers in the church can be paradoxical. Christians must deal with complicated and variegated claims to power, all of which borrow the name of God.



The texts for the next four weeks highlight the struggles in forming a community of God. They raise the question of power relations within the faithful community: How do we use the word "power" and what should be our first instinct in situations of conflict?

Min-Ah Cho is assistant professor of theology and spirituality at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minn.

[SEPTEMBER 7]

Slow Peace

Ezekiel 33:7-11; Psalm 119:33-40; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20

MATTHEW 18:15-20 demonstrates a carefulness and sensitivity to power relations in the Matthean community. Matthew uses the term *ekklesia* for the community—an assembly formed to decide or judge a particular case. To "sin" in this text means an "offense" against another member in an assembly, which may not only affect the relationship between the members involved but eventually destroy the whole community.

The text's suggested procedure for addressing conflict avoids coming to hasty conclusions. Figuring out what is right or wrong is not the primary concern for Matthew. Rather, the text describes carefully making space for members to enter in, moving from little ones to other members, and finally to the entire community. This procedure is designed to prevent a premature and overactive use of authority, while

respecting the agency of assembly members to speak for themselves or to correct their own faults. In this fashion, members are granted a chance to grow together through a conflict, instead of relying on authorities to remove it. Matthew's suggestion on how to handle conflicts demonstrates a way in which the members of a community, regardless of their status, can break open the complex and strict power structure.

But what if the offender refuses to listen, even to the entire community? Matthew tells us to "let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (18:17). While this may sound cruel and discriminatory, we must remember that the Matthean community was a mixed one. Gentiles and tax collectors were frequently the objects of Jesus' ministry. Thus the phrase suggests that a community's pastoral concern for the errant member does not completely

end, even after the painful step of expulsion has taken place. It rather demands that the community start from the beginning—as if the member had never been taught Jesus' words.

[SEPTEMBER 14]

Forgiving, Not Forgetting

Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 103:1-13; Romans 14:1-12; Matthew 18:21-35

AFTER ALL THE abuses Jacob's older sons have committed against their youngest brother, they are finally remorseful (Genesis 50:18). Joseph's forgiveness of his brothers is striking. "Am I in the place of God?" he asks (verse 19), because he wants to urge them to see their guilt as God sees it. However, Joseph differentiates forgiving from forgetting. He forgives his brothers, but he acknowledges their wrongdoing and affirms that it will be remembered by God.

Forgiving is not forgetting. When Jesus tells Peter to forgive his brother or sister "seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22), he does not indicate that forgiving entails forgetting, nor does he suggest that forgiveness justifies, minimizes, or excuses the wrong. Forgiveness does not allow the offender to forget what he or she has done. The process of forgiving involves acknowledging both the victim and the offender, reflecting on the wrong committed, and deciding how and what to think about it. The process can move forward only when the victim is ready and willing. One ought not to use God's name in vain in order to force a victim to forgive an offender.

Forgiveness cannot be automatically equated with justice, either. Though the victim decides to forgive, building justice is separate from forgiveness. Justice must include proper apologies, compensation, punishment, and restitution. To build justice is to envision hope. Without the proper act of remembering and amending injustice, a community cannot create a future. "The hope of a secure and livable world lies with disciplined nonconformists who are dedicated to justice, peace, and brotherhood [and sisterhood]," says Martin Luther King Jr.

"Living the Word" reflections for October can be found at www.sojo.net/magazine. "Preaching the Word," Sojourners' online resource for sermon preparation and Bible study, is available at sojo.net/ptw.

[SEPTEMBER 21]

'Because No One Hired Them'

Jonah 3:10 - 4:11; Psalm 145:1-8;
Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16

THE COMPLAINTS of those hired first in Matthew 20:1-12 sound normal and fair enough. They want to receive more because they labored longest and hardest. However, the landowner, God, considers their complaints to be unfair and challenges them, asking, "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?"

God's question shatters our narrow definition of goodness and justice. Jonah's constraining conception of mercy is also reproved by God. Just as God urges Jonah to see Nineveh as God does, God wants us to see the vineyard laborers' situation as God does. The parable thus reverses the sense of justice and fairness from ours to God's.

An often disregarded part of this text is what those who were hired last had been doing up until the landowner's final visit. The text does not suggest that they are lazy or irresponsible. Instead, they were not able to find work, even though they had been "standing idle all day," because no one had hired them (20:7). They were unwanted. In Jesus' time they would be the weak, sick, and disabled. In our time, the list expands to include the elderly, women, undocumented immigrants, the underemployed, and anyone who does not fit the demands of "normalcy." God's justice is to give priority to the unwanted and to protect them from being shamed, slandered, and neglected by the privileged.

The preferential option for the poor, which has become a central tenet of Catholic social thought, finds its biblical basis in this story. Some critics have suggested that the option stands against the middle class. On the contrary, the option is fundamental for all followers of Christ because it is a call for conversion, an urge for a paradigm shift that surpasses ethical standards constructed by capitalism. God's justice does not set one group against another. Instead, it enables the whole community to grow together by making it vulnerable before those who are most vulnerable.

[SEPTEMBER 28]

Mind of Christ?

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Psalm 25:1-9;
Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:23-32

"THE PARENTS have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2) was a popular proverb used as a scare tactic in Ezekiel's time. These words kept people from asking what they could change and led them to surrender to those more powerful, to accept life the way it was. By refuting the saying, Ezekiel delivers God's words, "All lives are mine" (verse 4). The life of all Israelites, both the parents and the children, are God's. All deserve God's blessing.

Paul echoes Ezekiel's urge. The key to understanding the famous Christological hymn is Paul's demand for a community of "the same mind" (Philippians 2:2). For Paul, the call for this type of community entails transforming the lifestyle of each and every member to that of Christ. In other words, Paul wants the Philippian Christians to adapt Christ's pattern of thinking and acting as they shape their identity as a member of the community following Christ. It requires not just a submission and self-emptying, but a careful awareness of and attendance to the various workings of power within the community. If there is an uneven distribution of power interfering with members' full participation in the community, the community as a whole cannot adequately be renewed in Christ's identity.

The misreading of Christ's *kenosis*—his self-denial and submission—has produced deleterious effects on people at the margins of Christian communities. For the sake of Christ's *kenosis*, women and minorities have been forced to accept submissive roles while powerful people justify their abuse of authority.

The Christological hymn challenges these destructive ways. The communal response to the kenotic call of Christ is a two-way operation. On the one hand, the desires for power-seeking and self-serving should be nullified. On the other hand, the systems that encourage and perpetuate destructive self-denial and lack of self-awareness should also be challenged. Thus the community, as a whole, is enabled to renew itself in Christ. ■



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The Party of Pink

WHEN MARK TWAIN supposedly said “reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated,” he didn’t know he was establishing a tweet for the ages. (He didn’t use Twitter. He was more of an Instagram guy.) It still stands as the best rejoinder to those who insist on seeing things for what they aren’t.

Politically speaking, pundits and legislators alike were guilty of prematurely identifying the cold carcass of the tea party last spring when establishment Republicans defeated their right-wing rivals in several primaries. Then came Eric Cantor who, as a Jew, never really fit the profile of an evangelical Christian, the preferred qualification for tea party membership. But as majority leader of the House, he was powerful and occasionally clear-spoken, two other characteristics not often found in tea party favorites.

Nonetheless, Cantor went down to defeat at the hands of an underfunded college professor whose only



must replace a deep sense of social responsibility with a couple really nice cars. Better that than the consequences for Cantor’s pollster, who predicted a 34 percent victory for his boss. (“Clean-up on aisle 12.”)

Even in Mississippi, a mainstream Republican stronghold, Sen. Thad Cochran barely beat back a tea party challenger by just a few thousand votes, and most of those were from Democrats. (If they’re stuck with continued obstructionism, they prefer it without a side of attitude.)

The point is, the tea party is like Lazarus, only better dressed and with less of an odor. And two months before the November election, the Republican Party is still struggling to understand why. That’s where I come in. I’m here to help. I can explain what the tea party is and for which it stands, when it’s not standing on John Boehner’s freshly polished Italian loafers.

Using small words and speaking slowly for people in the back, I can tell you the tea party members **simply want their country back**. They want to recover the America they’ve lost, and return to those days when a box of crayons came with a Caucasian color. It was called “flesh,” and it was nice and pink, you know, the color of Americans. No offense to our brown president—or, as the current Crayola palette might suggest, raw umber—but the

best leaders have always been pink. The Founding Fathers, Abraham Lincoln, William Howard Taft? Pink, pink, pink.

(Do crayons come with the color “guy”? Just asking. Because if Hillary is elected, the tea party is going to miss that, too.)

Tea party Americans want their freedom back. They still have freedom of assembly (in ridiculous outfits), and freedom of speech (to say dumb and scary things). But they miss that precious freedom to go into a bakery and not see a wedding cake with two little plastic men on top.

And they **also want to get back to the Constitution**, although that part has always been a little unclear to me. Did they lose it somewhere? Did their copy fall out of the car on a family trip to a creationism theme park? If so, they can get another copy at the gift shop, which also carries postcards with drawings of people expressing their constitutional right to live with dinosaurs. Hey, it’s science.

It’s hard to know how all those grumpy tea partiers will affect the upcoming election. But they’re sure as heck not going to vote for Obama. One six-year term is enough. It says so in the Constitution. Probably. ■

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.

Ken Davis

America should be like a box of crayons, but with fewer colors.

apparent advantage was a more-evangelical hair style. But his secret weapon was his intolerance for undocumented workers, a favorite position for tea party Americans whose food is harvested almost exclusively by undocumented workers. But let’s not quibble. People are entitled to their opinions, even if the food on their plates sits in mute repudiation of those beliefs. (Luke said “the stones will cry out,” but I’d be happier if a bowl of vegetables would just stand up and say a few cryptic words before dessert.)

So now Eric Cantor’s political career is over, and he moves on to the pitiable life of a wealthy lobbyist who, through no fault of his own,



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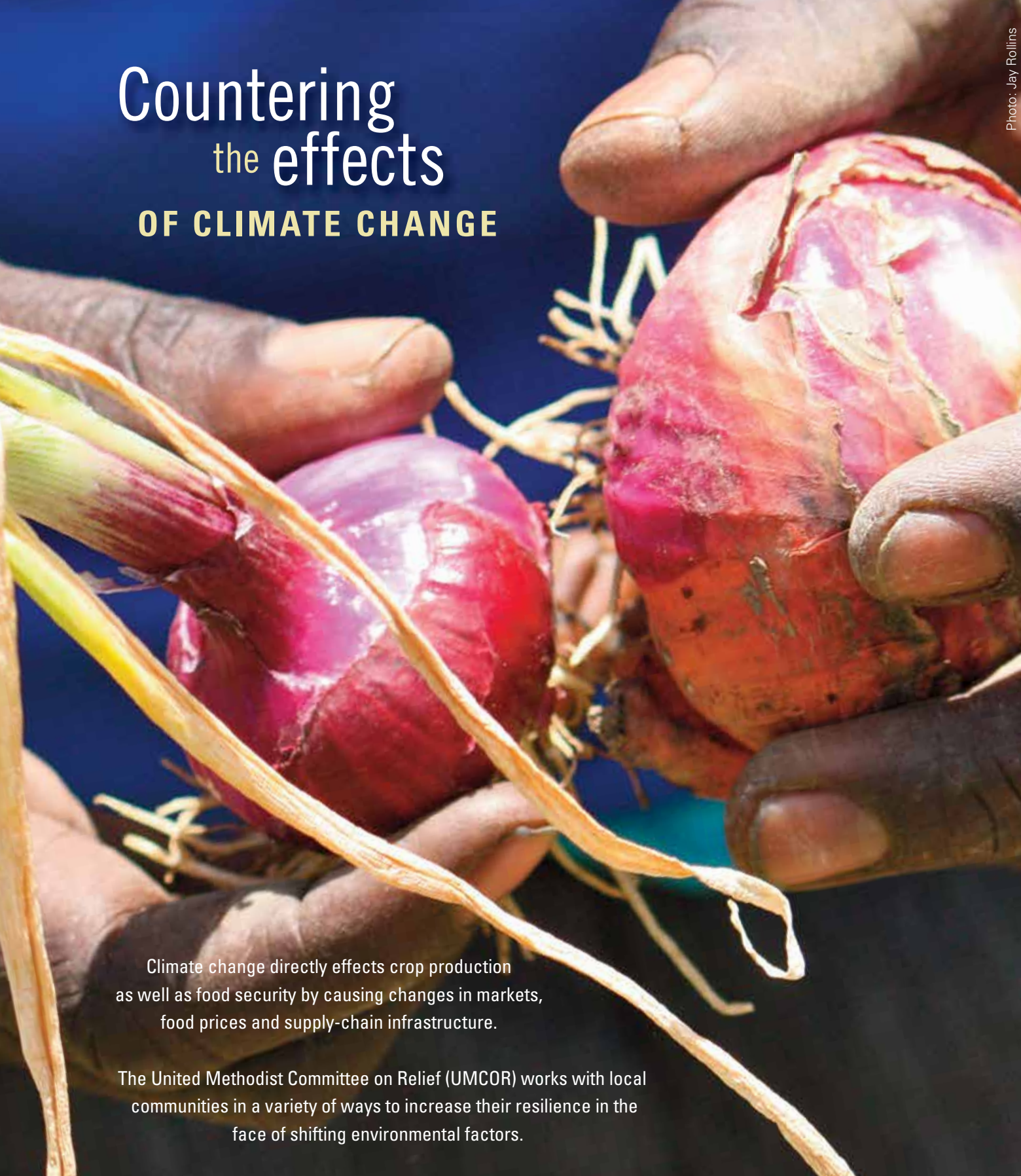
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